

**STRATEGY  
RESEARCH  
PROJECT**

The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Defense or any of its agencies. This document may not be released for open publication until it has been cleared by the appropriate military service or government agency.

**MAJOR FACTORS AFFECTING RECRUITING:  
MAKING THEM WORK FOR THE ARMY**

**BY**

**LIEUTENANT COLONEL LEE A. HARRIS  
United States Army**

**DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT A:  
Approved for Public Release.  
Distribution is Unlimited.**

**SENIOR SERVICE COLLEGE FELLOWS  
AY00**



**U.S. ARMY WAR COLLEGE, CARLISLE BARRACKS, PA 17013-5050**

**20000801 039**

**Major Factors Affecting Recruiting:  
Making Them Work for the Army**

Lieutenant Colonel Lee A. Harris  
United States Army

Military Fellow Research Report  
May 2000

Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies  
Washington, D.C.

## **ABSTRACT**

AUTHOR: Lee A. Harris

TITLE: Major Factor Affecting Recruiting: Making Them Work For The Army

FORMAT: Strategy Research Project

DATE: 10 May 00

PAGES: 76

CLASSIFICATION: Unclassified

The purpose of this report was to identify major factors affecting recruiting which is causing an increasing number of America's youth are saying no to enlisting in the Army and to provide recommendations as to what is needed to change to trend. Based on the research methodology and analysis of the data, numerous findings and recommendations emerged. For simplicity, they were categorized into three areas: young people attitudes, beliefs and values; impact of influencers on young people decision to enlist; other external factors impacting on young people decision to enlist. This document discusses the components of each in detail.

Influencers and other external factors are impacting on recruiting, as they impact young people's post-high school decisions. Influencers include: parents, school officials, friends & peers, celebrities, active duty soldiers and their family members and retirees. Other external factors include, the impact of a strong economy, base closure/downsizing, recruiting marketing & advertisement, less competitive Army enlistment incentives, benefits and pay, An outdated GI Bill, Public's relationship and education of the Army and unofficial recruiters also impact on young people's decision to enlist.

## **CONTENTS**

Author's Acknowledgements

I.	<b>Introduction.....</b>	1
II.	<b>Methodology.....</b>	4
III.	<b>Background.....</b>	10
IV.	<b>Findings and Recommendations.....</b>	17
V.	<b>Conclusion.....</b>	71
	<b>Endnotes .....</b>	73
	<b>Appendices</b>	
	<b>A. Interviews</b>	
	<b>B. Focus Groups and Discussion Groups</b>	

## **Author's Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank a number of individuals who have assisted me throughout this year, thereby making this study possible. First, I thank the Army for allowing me to serve my senior service college year as a Senior Military Fellow, assigned to the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies. This year away from the mainstream Army has provided me the opportunity to reflect and refocus on those things that are important both to the Army and to me.

Without question, this completed study and its presentation would not have been possible without the help, guidance and assistance of the great professionals at the Joint Center. I am very grateful to Mr. Eddie N. Williams (president of the Joint Center) and his staff, who without hesitation welcomed me into the Joint Center's family and assisted me in various capacities throughout the year. Specifically, a special thanks to my sponsor, Vice President for Research Dr. Margaret Simms, whose assistance and guidance were critical to the conduct of this research and the publication of this report. In addition to the numerous other quality professionals on the staff, I would like to specially recognize Davida Duckett, Keisha Sumner, Liselle Yorke and Marc DeFrancis, who were instrumental in the editing, publication, and presentation of this report:

I also thank the many senior civilian and military leaders who provided me with input that was essential in getting this study underway. I would especially like to thank my guest speaker, Brigadier General Billy Cooper, Deputy Commanding General-East, United States Army Recruiting Command, for taking the time participate in the formal presentation and for the expertise that he brought to the table. Also a special thanks to my panel members, Major

General (Retired) Arthur Dean, chairman and CEO of the Community Anti-Drug Coalition, and  
Mark Brophy, Enlisted Bonus Manager, United States Army Personnel Command.

Finally, a very special thanks to my wife Annette Harris, who helped to keep me focused and for  
being a great sounding board throughout the year.

## I. Introduction

The purpose of this study was to identify why propensity to enlist in the Army has declined and why an increasing number of young people are saying no to enlisting as well as to provide recommendations to change that trend. The United States' national defense and its continued role as a superpower are linked to its ability to maintain a strong fighting force. To that end, the Army must maintain a sufficient flow of new recruits into its ranks. Current recruiting challenges caused the Army's leadership to do a top to bottom review of recruiting practices, including current recruiting tools and the incentives available to attract young people to enlist.

According to 1998 Youth Attitudes Tracking Survey (YATS) data, the propensity to enlist in the Army among America's youth has been on a downward trend. This trend might partially explain why the Army missed its recruiting mission by approximately 6,300 people in 1999. In an effort to preclude further shortfalls, the Army pulled out all the stops to entice more people to enlist. However, even such enlistment incentives as lucrative signing bonuses, pay increases, and tuition benefits have proved not to be panaceas.<sup>1</sup> If the Army continues to miss its recruiting objectives, some suggest that it may be time to consider bringing back the most unpopular method – the draft. Possible good news is that 1999 data from the YATS survey, which have not been fully consolidated and analyzed and therefore not included in this report, indicate that propensity may be on the increase. However, it is too early to tell if this will amount to more enlistments in the future.

There is a growing rift between the military and the public. This rift, which has both direct and indirect effects on both young and older Americans, is impacting on recruiting. I believe the issues highlighted in this report, if properly addressed, will help to close that rift and put recruiting back on track toward obtaining enough young people to fill the ranks and enable the Army to perform its worldwide missions.

### **Other Ongoing Studies and Initiatives**

The problems associated with the declining propensity to enlist have the attention of leaders at all levels of the Army and the Department of Defense. The secretary of the Army along with the chief of staff have established working groups to study this problem and provide recommendations to improve recruiting. As of this writing, the findings and recommendations from these groups have not been approved for release to the public.

The United States Army Recruiting Command (USAREC) is continuously studying initiatives that are designed to improve recruiting practices and the quality of life for recruiters themselves. Recruiters happy with the quality of their lives are likely to be more effective in recruiting. USAREC used an organizational assessment tool called a Functional Area Assessment (FAA) to conduct a total review of its organization and provide recommendations for improving the yield from recruitment efforts. Its review findings and recommendations were focused mainly on the overall command and its people and what is needed to improve the overall recruiting operations, personnel and equipment issues, resources, and so on.

Several students in the Army War College have written papers on recruiting and what is needed to fix it. Among the completed papers is one written by LTC John P. Mikula, entitled "The Challenge of Manning in the Post-Cold War Army." The study cited three factors contributing to problems faced in manning the Army: (1) military strategy; (2) dollars appropriated for defense spending; (3) attitudes and perceptions of American society. The importance of these three factors is consistent with my findings.

The issue of declining propensity and the negative effects that it has on the Army's ability to meet its recruiting goals are being studied at all levels. My study examined the impact on recruiting of influencers and other external factors not yet fully explored. Examining the views and attitudes of today's youth as they relate to these factors is a vital way to look at the recruiting problem facing America's Army, and from it we are able to offer possible solutions.

Based on my research, I am convinced that the major factor contributing to the problems in recruiting is lack of support for youth in their enlistment decisions. Those people who have the most influence on youths' decisions about post-high school options are not encouraging them to enlist, nor are they being supportive of youths who are inclined to enlist. We must win back the influencers and address the other factors for support, if we are to turn the tide on the downward trend.

## **II. Methodology**

This report summarizes the findings from a nine-month study that focused on why an increasing number of America's youth are saying *no* to enlisting in the Army. Specifically, the study looked at influencers and external factors that impact on young people's decisions as they consider enlisting in the Army as a post-high school option.

I initially obtained input and information from both senior civilian and military leaders and reviewed the available literature. I developed three major hypotheses based on that preliminary information. I used focus groups, surveys, and personal, telephone, and Internet interviews to test these hypotheses. Internet chat services provided me with an opportunity to discuss this subject with a broad range of people across the nation

In addition to other sources, I used data from the latest Youth Attitudes Tracking Survey (YATS) (1998 data) as a means of gathering information about the feelings and thoughts of America's youth. YATS is one of the main tools the military uses to measure intentions. The survey questions are used to determine how likely youth are to enlist. The four possible responses are "very likely," "somewhat likely," "somewhat unlikely," and "very unlikely". Youth are identified as having a positive propensity to enlist if their responses are in either of the first two categories.<sup>2</sup>

The phases of my research methodology were as follows.

### **Phase I. Interviews and Meetings With Senior Leadership and Others**

Interviews and meetings included key leaders, both civilian and military, some of whom were involved in the recruiting business while others were not. These individuals were chosen because of the many years of experience, knowledge, and insight that they possess on recruiting and the Army in general. Key leaders included the deputy assistant secretary of the Army for Military Personnel Management and Equal Opportunity Policy, general officers in the Army, other field-grade and junior officers, and various key leaders. Interviews, both face-to-face and telephonic, were conducted in the first phase to help develop my hypotheses. These interviews and meetings along with previous studies on recruiting resulted in three hypotheses regarding why young people seem to be less interested in the Army as a post high-school option. (See Appendix A for a list of interviews and meetings.)

### **Phases II. Hypothesis Review**

After analyzing the valuable information obtained from the initial interviews, meetings and literature reviews, in phase I, key hypotheses emerged. The hypotheses are grouped under three major heading of this report, as follows.

*Hypotheses relating to young people's attitudes, beliefs, and values as they impact on recruiting.*

Young Americans are becoming less interested in enlisting in the Army because: (1) they do not

believe that serving in the Army (military) is beneficial in meeting their desired goals; (2) they continue to hear negative things about the Army; (3) they believe that the pay is too low for what is expected of them. If these hypotheses are valid, then changing young people's attitudes, values, and beliefs about the Army may result in more enlistments.

*Hypotheses relating to influencers' (e.g, parents, relatives, teachers, veterans, and friends) impact on potential recruits.*

America's youth are increasingly saying *no* to enlistment because: (1) they are receiving either negative input or lack of encouragement from people who wield a great deal of influence in their lives as they consider the Army as a post-high school option; (2) key influencers, such as parents, other relatives, and school officials, are more apt to be encouraging young people to go to college after high school instead of enlisting.

*Hypotheses relating to the impact that other external factors have on potential recruits and the overall recruiting effort.*

The following other external factors are contributing to young people's increasing likelihood to say *no* to enlistment: (1) the current strong economy is providing more job opportunities with improved benefits; (2) base closures and downsizing are having negative effects; (3) marketing and advertisement strategies have become outdated; (4) Army pay, benefits, and enlistment incentives have become less attractive; (5) the GI Bill is outdated; (6) the public's education about and understanding of the Army and the country's National Military Strategy are lacking; (7) The number of unofficial recruiters has declined.

If these hypotheses are confirmed, then addressing the issues raised by each of them will play a key role in changing how young people view serving in the Army, resulting in more enlistments.

### **Phase III: Focus Groups, Discussion Groups, and Surveys**

This stage of the research focused on testing the preceding hypotheses using 16 focus groups and 6 other personal and Internet interviews. Focus groups and discussion groups ranged in size from 2 to 250 individuals, with most groups having roughly half a dozen individuals. The face-to-face focus groups and Internet chat group discussions provided direct insight into the views of individuals at all levels concerning the reason young people are increasingly less interested in enlisting in the Army. According to a USAREC official, recruiting is difficult across the nation and the challenge is not confined to any specific area. Based on this information, and in the interest of time and resources, I chose to use Florida, my home state, and Virginia, my current duty location, as the target locations for the bulk of personal interviews and surveys with high school and college students. Discussions with young people around the world on the Internet confirmed that recruiting is a nationwide problem. Army recruits were interviewed at Fort Jackson, SC, and Fort Knox, KY, due to the fact that these are major training bases. This provided me with different perspectives and experiences at different stages of the Army life.

While face-to-face interviews were very valuable, I found the Internet interviews just as valuable. The Internet provided an excellent opportunity to conduct live discussions with chat groups of various categories of people, e.g. college and high school students, veterans, and parents, and provided a total-country perspective. The participants on the Internet appeared to be more forthcoming with their true thoughts and feelings about the Army than the face-to-face

respondents. Clearly, it would have been cost-prohibitive to travel around the country to obtain the amount of information provided through the Internet. These discussions revealed common views that confirmed the research data previously collected by others as well as my own data.

The focus groups provided the best input from active players ranging from the “*lets talk*” to the “*you’re in the Army now*” stages of recruitment and Army life. The participants ranged from prospective recruits to soldiers leaving the Army after their commitment. They provided different perspectives and perceptions of the Army and life in the Army in general. The focus groups may be categorized as follows in the order they play in the Army recruitment and life cycle.

**1<sup>st</sup> players** (potential recruits) (43 participants) - Individuals in the following groups provided the civilian perspective on the desirability of joining the Army. High school (HS): South Ridge Senior HS, Miami, FL (3 participants); Killian Senior HS, Miami, FL (5 participants); Woodbridge Senior HS, Woodbridge VA (27 participants). Colleges: Northern Virginia Junior College (4 participants); and University of the District of Columbia, Washington DC (4 participants).

**2<sup>nd</sup> players** (processing for enlisting) (88 participants in group seminars and written surveys) – An initial perspective of the Army was obtained from individuals who already decided to enlist and were processing through the Military Entrance and Processing Station (MEPS) in Baltimore, MD.

**3<sup>rd</sup> players** (processing into the Army) (950 participants, using focus groups and surveys) –A perspective of the Army from the standpoint of those now in the first days of transitioning to

Army life, came from soldiers processing through the two Reception and Training Battalions located at Fort Jackson, SC , and Fort Knox, KY, which are major Army training bases.

**4<sup>th</sup> players** (conducting training in the Army) (250 participants in group sessions and written surveys) –Another perspective of the Army from those in training was obtained from soldiers undergoing Advanced Individual Training (AIT) located at Fort Jackson, SC, and Fort Knox, KY.

**5<sup>th</sup> players** (active-duty soldiers and their family members) (371 participants) - These individuals located in VA, DC, MD, SC, KY, and other areas were reached via the Internet, providing a seasoned perspective of the Army.

**6<sup>th</sup> players** (active-duty soldiers processing out of the Army) (123 participants) - These individuals provided a great opportunity to hear thoughts about the Army from the perspective of those who decided to separate.

\*\* Focus groups and other discussion groups that are not included in the above groups also included Army officers and commissioned officers, relatives of potential recruits, retirees, and veterans.

### **III. Background**

Over 26 years ago, the United States adopted volunteerism as the means to filling its military ranks. For the most part, this approach has been successful. However, recent trends of declining propensity resulted in two consecutive years (1998 and 1999) in which the Army missed its recruiting goals. Current recruiting problems have caused concern among both civilian and military leaders. If the volunteer Army is to survive and meets its personnel manning requirements, propensity must increase.

In order to maintain readiness, the Army needs a continuous influx of young Americans to meet personnel requirements. For future reference throughout this report, "readiness" is defined as: The U.S. military's ability to promptly pick up, deploy, and do what it is asked to do: fight, keep the peace, alleviate humanitarian suffering, or make a show of force in crisis. These are a broad set of missions. However, they all make sense in a world where we have to deter immediate threats, hold alliances, and try to save innocent lives.<sup>3</sup>

In June 1973, the last drafted recruit reported to basic training, marking the end of a system that the Army had relied on for over 30 years to provide the bulk of its enlisted manpower. Thus also ended a system that had occupied a considerable amount of the attention of young males once they reached their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. It was an unpopular system that for many had become a symbol of injustice in the American fabric. And from that moment began the Modern Volunteer Army (MVA), which the United States has relied upon with various levels of success for the past 26 years<sup>4</sup>. The MVA grew out of recommendations made in the Gates Commission Report of 1970,

which called for an end to conscription on the grounds that it was an implicit hidden tax, unevenly imposed, on those who were drafted.<sup>5</sup>

Recruiting accessions for fiscal year (FY) 1998 fell short of goal by 750 and for fiscal year 1999 fell short by 6,300, making the latter year the most difficult recruiting year since the post-Vietnam 1970s. These shortfalls are causing concern among both military and civilian leaders and could significantly impact on readiness. Past, current, and projected shortfalls are even causing some to call for the return of the draft. However, there is very little support in Congress, the Pentagon, or among the public for this seemingly obvious solution

Dedicated young Americans in the past have demonstrated their positive willingness to serve this great nation. They have served in sufficient numbers to ensure the Army's ability to meet its worldwide military missions. However, measurements of propensity (interest or desire) to enlist in the Army declined among men from 1991 through 1994 and then flattened out, while propensities for women remained relatively flat throughout the decade. (See figure 1) While there are current modest increases in propensity, it is still significantly lower than in the early 1990s. Although propensity does not guarantee enlistments, it is a good indicator of American youths' post-high school desires at the time of the survey.

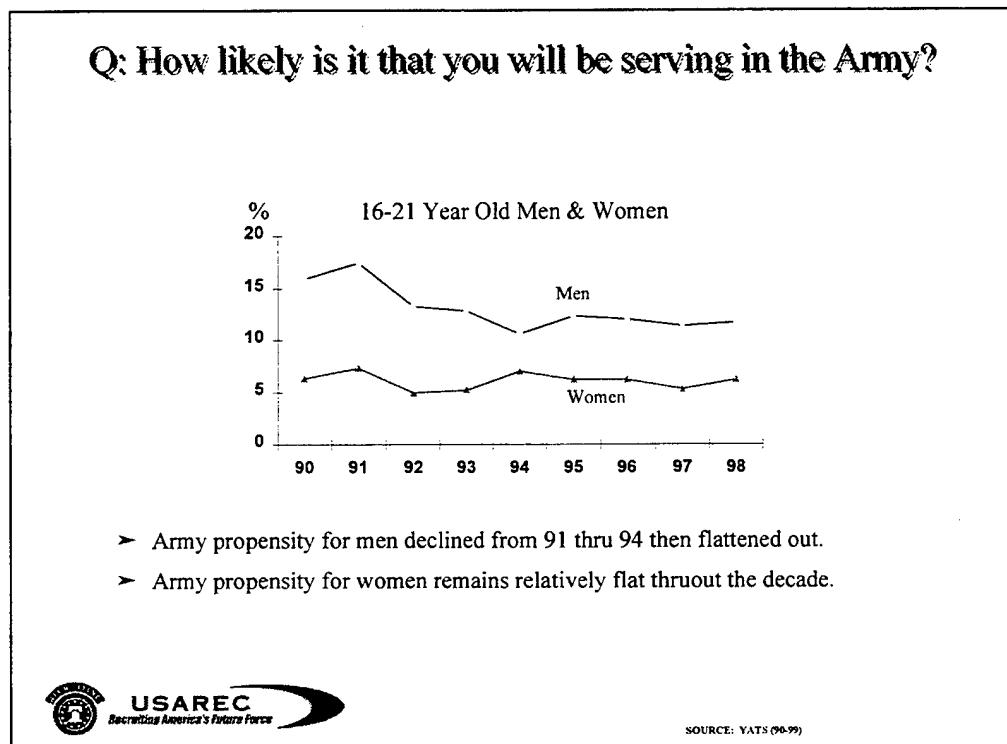
With the inception of the all-volunteer force (AVF) in 1973, Army recruiting success has been closely tied to changes in youth labor markets.<sup>6</sup> In light of today's booming economy, patriotism and a desire to serve are not enough to keep the Armed Forces manned to meet all structure requirements. Currently, recruiting is getting harder because more kids are choosing to pursue

other job opportunities or schools over the Army. While military officials attribute much of the current recruiting problem to a booming peacetime economy that has expanded civilian job opportunities, surveys point also to shifts in values and attitudes that are distancing young people from the Armed Forces.<sup>7</sup>

In addition to changes in the views of young people, based on my research and that of others, influencers (people with special influence over the lives and outlooks of others) have also undergone a continual shift in their own values and attitudes about the military.

Although influencers play a vital role in the process of helping young people make decisions about their post-high school plans, they have not been a serious target in the Army's marketing and advertisement strategies. The Army has continued to offer various enlistment incentives designed to attract America's youth, including, increasing enlistment bonuses, improving the Army College Fund program, and other initiatives, the results of which have not been fully evaluated at the time of this writing.

Figure 1. Propensity for Army Service Among Young Men and Women, 1990-1999



Data provided by USAREC's YATS Manager

Before addressing the roles of influencers and other external factors, it is important to discuss the recruiting command and its recruiter force. While there are many organizations and individuals currently involved in the recruiting efforts, the U.S. Army Recruiting Command (USAREC) is the main organization charged with this mission.

### Recruiting Organization

The U.S. Army Recruiting Command (USAREC) is charged with the mission of recruiting men and women to meet the needs of the Active and Reserve Components for the U.S. Army. To accomplish its mission as of March 2000, USAREC is projected to operate with 8,373 active duty recruiters.

## **Recruiters**

USAREC's key resources for accomplishing its critical recruiting mission are its recruiters, of which there are two categories: Detailed Recruiter Force (DRFs) and Volunteers. According to the Enlisted Adjutant General's Branch, over the last three years DRFs (draftees) averaged around 75 percent of the total recruiting force, and volunteers averaged around 25 percent. All recruiters currently undergo six weeks of formal recruiting training. During the year 2000, the course length will increase to eight weeks to add "face to face prospecting," which will allow trainee recruiters to go to malls and other places to practice their newly acquired skills and extensive computer training on laptop computers, which are the major tool used to sell the Army and its benefits to potential recruits. Figure 2 shows what type of noncommissioned officer is serving as a recruiter (note however that it does not reflect the demographic of the newly assigned young corporal recruiters that the Army has recently started using in hopes of attracting more young people).

Figure 2.  
Demographics

**Your Army Recruiter**

**Hand Picked Based on Past Performance**  
**2nd Term of Service**  
**Selected From Various Jobs Within the Army**  
**Serve 3 Year Detail**  
**Majority are Staff Sergeants**  
**All Have High School Diploma**  
**56% Have Some College or Degree**  
**Average Service is 11 Years**  
**Average Age is 33**

SOURCE: PERSCOM/EDAS  
OCT 99 (UPDATED YEARLY)

Recruiting for America's Army

Does not reflect the demographics of the new corporal recruiters

Recruiters are working harder than ever, often putting in 65-hour weeks. But they are chasing an ever-shrinking supply of high school students willing to even consider a military career.<sup>8</sup>

Recruiters are instrumental in converting potential recruits into actual contracts.<sup>9</sup> They do in fact influence youths' decision to enlist, although perhaps not as much as is suggested by some.

Table 1 shows who first talked to the 1,497 individuals in my study about joining the Army.

These 1,497 individuals had made the commitment to enlist and were currently processing for enlistment. Outlooks comparing civilian and Army life were best provided by soldiers who were in the initial phase of their Army training.

**Table 1.**  
**“Who first talked to you about the Army?”**

School Officials	Recruiter	Family	Friends	TV ads	Other	Total	Influencers	Recruiters
9	<b>452</b>	569	369	39	59	1497	<b>1006</b>	<b>452</b>
0.6%	<b>30.2%</b>	38.0%	24.6%	2.6%	3.9%	100	<b>67.2</b>	<b>30.2</b>
<b>Ratio 2.2 to 1</b>								

Data collected from individuals processing through MEPS, Reception Battalion and AIT Battalion  
 “Other” includes: co-workers, movies, JROTC & acquaintances

Again, it should be noted that often the seed planted by influencers for enlistment consideration occurs long before recruiters ever make contact with potential recruits. In any case, recruiters are still the front-line forces for the daily contact with the civilian community.

As mentioned earlier, there are two categories of recruiters who are attempting to recruit volunteers: Detailed Recruiters (drafted into recruiting) and Volunteer Recruiters. The most interesting comment heard during this research came from a recruiter who said, “It seems rather odd and ironic that the Army’s recruiter force is comprised mostly of detailed recruiters (draftees) and not mostly volunteers.”

Because of the nature of their work, recruiters should be eager to serve and that eagerness must radiate as they talk to potential applicants. They must believe in the Army and that belief must be abundantly obvious as they deal with the public. The way the public views them will have a tremendous impact on their influence. Several recruiters commented that due to the pressure to make mission, the public perceives them as only interested in making their quotas, which is a “turn off” for potential recruits and their influencers. The public should see recruiters as highly motivated professional soldiers who are representing a great institution.

## **IV. Findings and Recommendations**

Major findings that resulted from this study are included below. Each finding is followed by recommended solutions. The findings are summarized by the three basic sets of hypotheses: young people's attitudes, beliefs and values; impact of influencers on young people's decisions to enlist; and other external factors impacting on young people's decisions to enlist. Many of these recommendations are strategic and will in some case require a cultural change in our society as it views and values the Army and national defense in general.

It is absolutely essential that we take action to address these recruiting issues or we could be faced with the possibility of bringing the draft back, which is not desirable from anyone's point of view.

### **Young People's Attitudes, Beliefs, and Values as They Relate to the Army**

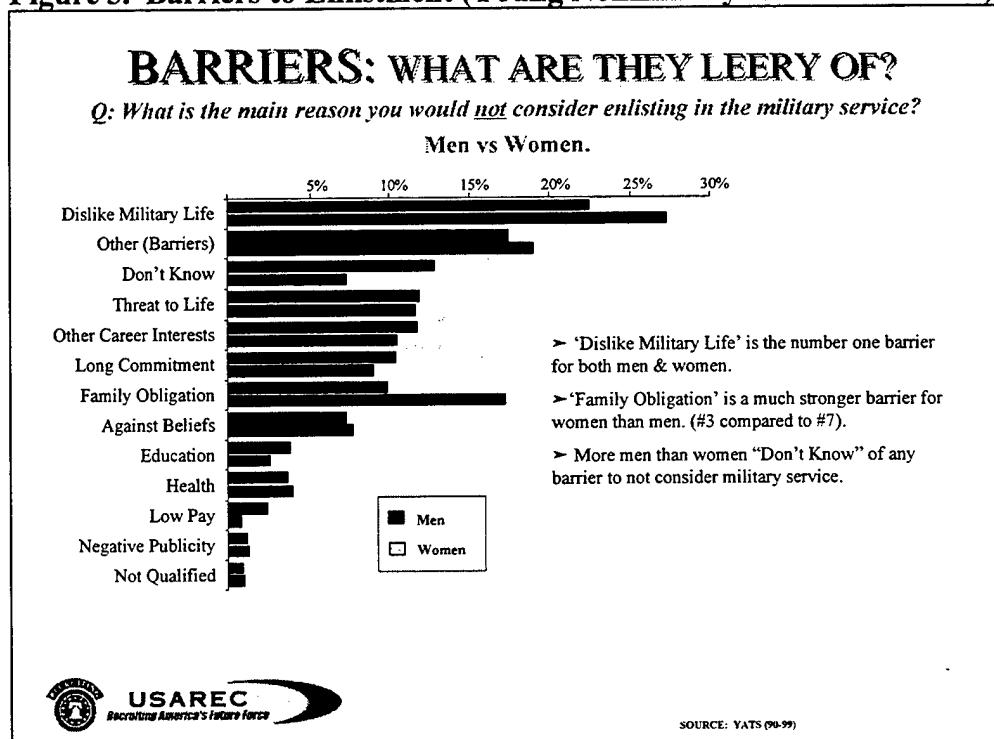
Input from focus group members and other discussions confirmed that the attitudes, beliefs, and values held concerning the Army are impacting on successful recruiting. In addition to my study, past propensity studies also indicate that America's youth are displaying less interest in enlisting in the Army than in the early 90s. Three-quarters of all high-school seniors today say they have no interest in joining the military at all, up from about 55 percent in 1976.<sup>10</sup>

Fewer and fewer young people are becoming interested in joining the Army due to many barriers that are critical as they consider this decision. These barriers, which apply to both men and

women, must be fully understood and addressed if the Army is to reconnect with young people. Participants in my study validated previously collected data regarding the concerns that young people have about the military. (See Figure 3) A lot of the young people I interviewed consider the reasons/issues listed in that figure as being insurmountable and, therefore, are continuing to shift their desires away from the Army. Overcoming the most prevalent barrier, "dislike for military life", will require a great deal of marketing and advertisement to educate young people on the fun, challenge, and fulfillment of Army life. Once this barrier is broken, the rest of the barriers will begin to lower.

Not surprisingly, when I asked study participants how they were made aware of these barriers to enlisting and what they meant, the consensus was that they had heard about them from family, friends, news reports, and other means. In interviews, older people (influencers) who impact young people's decisions to consider enlisting expressed the view that the barriers young people have are real and justified. (Influencers will be covered later in this report.)

**Figure 3. Barriers to Enlistment (Young Nonmilitary Men and Women)**



### ***Recommendations***

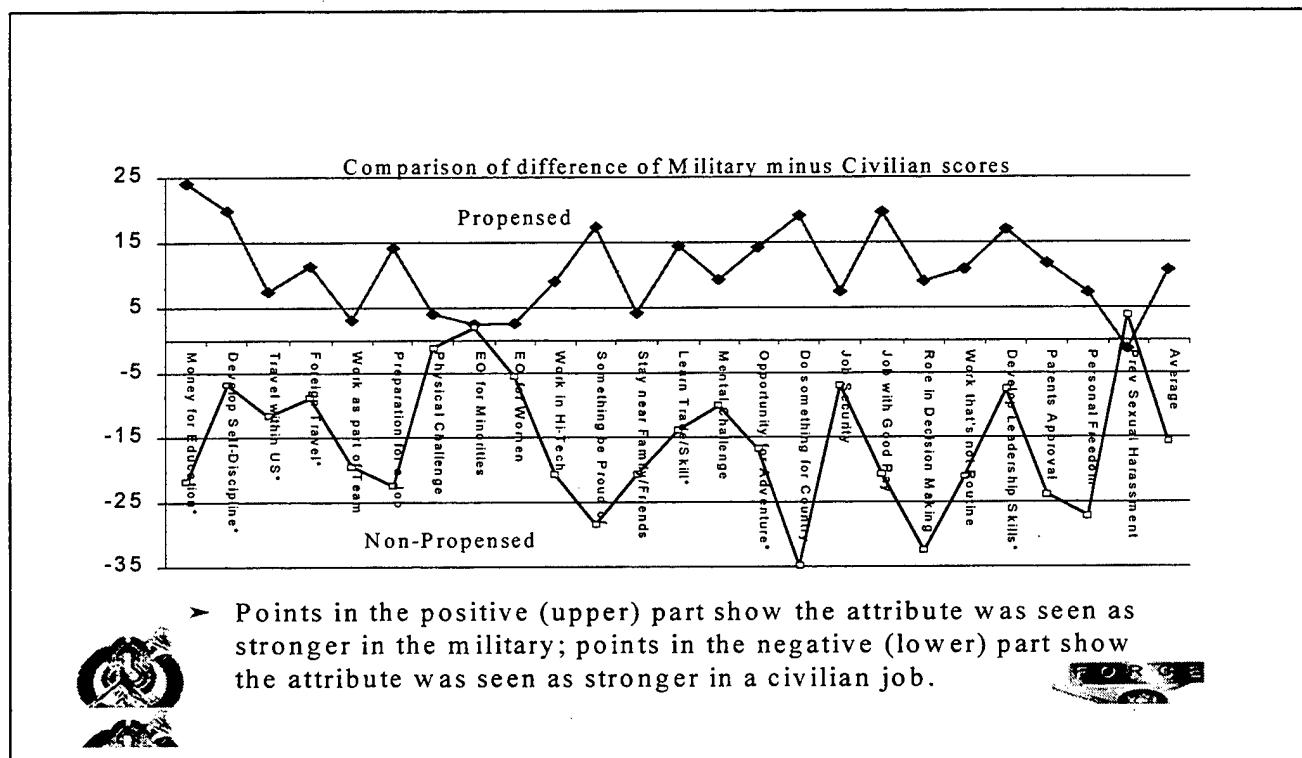
- USAREC should develop aggressive marketing and advertisement strategies using recently enlisted young people to address these barriers.
- USAREC should develop a tool for recruiters to use to address these barriers in a proactive manner rather being reactive. It would also help if these barriers were addressed in junior high schools where students first begin to consider their post-high school options. Junior ROTC programs could help in this effort.

### **Attributes/Values Perceived in Military vs. Civilian Jobs**

Today's youth have certain values regarding their future that will affect their post-high school decisions. It is important to understand how young people feel about the values and attributes found in military and civilian jobs, and then work to make the Army more appealing. Figure 4 shows information gathered by the YATS survey pertaining to men's attitudes and values that are important to both those with and those without a propensity to enlist.

As noted in Figure 4, only on one occasion do those with a propensity for enlistment show any negative attitudes and values, whereas those with a propensity against enlistment show only two positive attitudes and values (out of 25 possible attributes) toward the military. In this graph, positive points indicate that an attribute was seen as stronger in the military, while negative points indicate that it was seen as stronger in a civilian job.

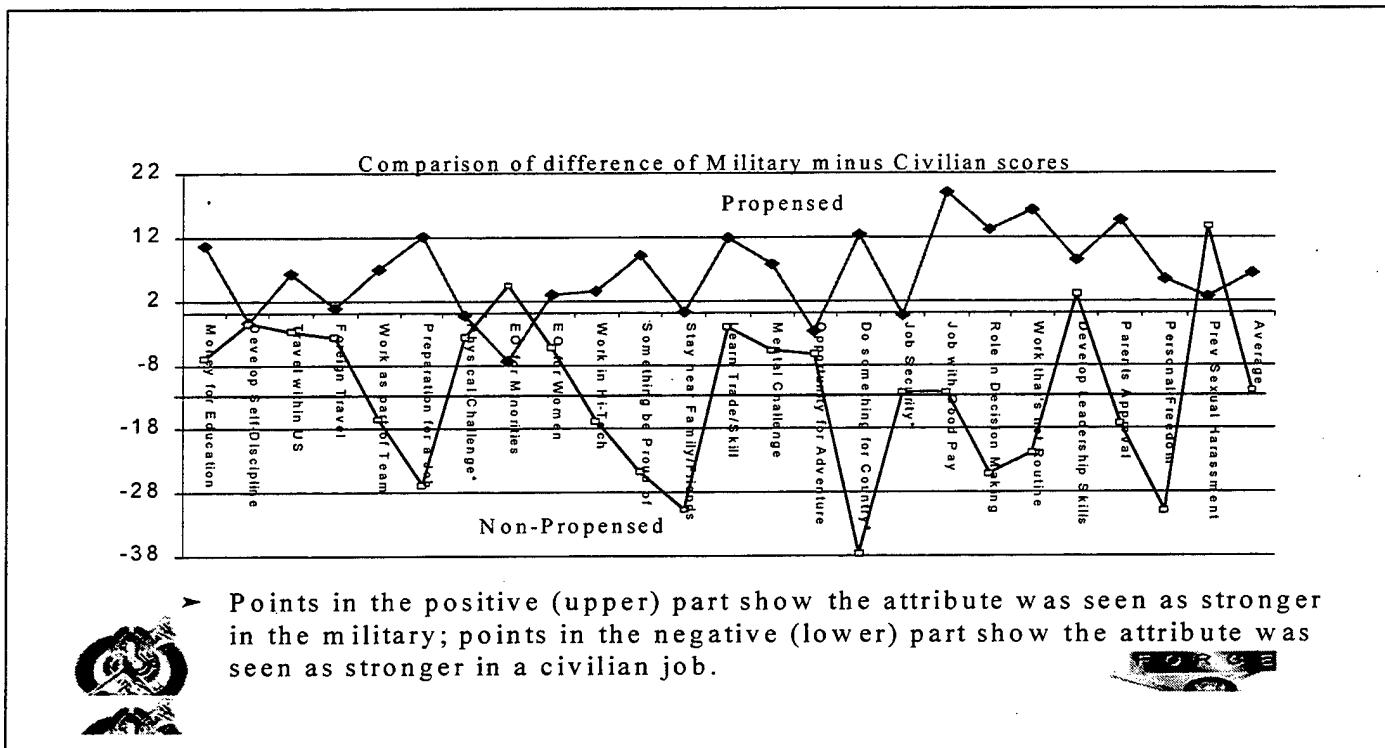
**Figure 4. Men's Attributes/Values Found in Military or Civilian Jobs**



- Points in the positive (upper) part show the attribute was seen as stronger in the military; points in the negative (lower) part show the attribute was seen as stronger in a civilian job.

Figure 5 shows women's attitudes and values that are important to today's youth. On five occasions those with a propensity-for show negative attitudes and values, while those with propensity-against show only three positive attitudes and values toward the military.

**Figure 5. Women's Attitudes/Values Found in Military or Civilian Jobs**



### ***Recommendation***

- The Department of Defense, along with the Army, must increase efforts to educate young people and the public in general about the attributes and values found in military jobs versus civilian jobs.

Input from focus groups and other discussions clearly suggests that young people are more savvy today than in the past. They know exactly what they want and what they are willing to sacrifice to get it. Many of these young people made it very clear that the Army and all that comes with it are not worth the commitment and sacrifices that would be required of them. After talking to many young people, it is clear to this researcher that they perceive that they will do better for themselves by going to college or getting a civilian job versus enlisting in the Army. However, surprisingly, even though the majority interviewed stated that they were not interested in the Army, many did state that the Army might be good for people who need "direction" and "discipline". In order to get the forces we need, the Army should be seen as a place for motivated young people who are interested in bettering themselves and making a contribution to the nation, and *not* as a place for people who need direction or discipline.

Table 2 reflects the results of personal and Internet interviews with young people, who were asked whether they were interested in joining the Army, and if not, why not. The interviews comprised 347 young people (51 face-to-face interviews and 296 through Internet chats.) In the survey, 239 (68.9%) responded "no" to enlisting in the Army, for the reasons listed in Table 3.

**Table 2.**  
**"Are you interested in joining the Army, and if not, why not?"**

Yes	No	Undecided	Total	
69	239	39	347	
19.9	68.9	11.2	100.0	
<b>Yes to No ratio: 1 to 3.5</b>				

Data collected from Internet and personal interviews

Listed in Table 3, below, are the major reasons that the above individuals stated as to why they would not join the Army or remained undecided. The top two reasons -- (1) "Going to college"

and (2) "Better civilian jobs" -- are no great surprise, from what has been revealed through other research and study projects. The third reason, (3) "Parents are against it," confirms the key role parents play in their kids' decision making. While "Heard too many bad things" did not rank very high, it was clear during this research that most of the impressions young people have about the Army are based on negative things that they have heard from various places. (This will be discussed in more detail later in this report.) It should be noted that even though some respondents did not indicate college as their reason for not enlisting, enrollment is still a factor in their decision. The respondents who indicated that their parents would be against their enlisting also stated that their parents wanted them to go to college. The "Undecided" population indicated that while they have not made their decision about enlisting, the reasons listed in Table 3 would be among the reasons why they might choose not to enlist.

**Table 3.****"Why are you saying no or are undecided about enlisting in the Army?"**

	"NO"		Undecided		Yes
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
Going to college	143	59.8	22	56.4	
Civilian job	38	15.9	6	15.4	
Parents are against	21	8.8	2	5.1	
Not enough pay	18	7.5	5	12.8	
Heard bad things	10	4.2			
Too many rules	5	2.1	4	10.3	
No respect	2	0.8			
Other	2	0.8			
Total	<b>239</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>69</b>
No	239				
Undecided	39				
Yes	69				
<b>Total Participants</b>	<b>347</b>				

Data collected from the Internet and personal interviews

Included in the "Other" category is the remaining perception among young people that only the lower economic class of American society joins the Army in particular, and the Armed Forces in general. When asked why they felt this way, again without hesitation I was told that only people who can't afford to go to college or get a good job join the Army. This perception must be addressed if the Army expects to increase enlistment by recruiting young people from all economic backgrounds. Also included in the "Other" category is young people's perception that it is just "not cool" to join the Army when their friends are going to college.

Young people who participated in this study did not hesitate to answer my questions, which indicated to me that they had given this subject some previous thought and were convinced that

their responses were sound and, more importantly, the normal feelings among other young people. These issues listed above are not new to the Army, but they must be addressed immediately if the Army hopes to motivate more people to enlist in larger numbers and attract the target audience listed in Figure 6.

**Figure 6.**  
**Target Audience for Enlistment**

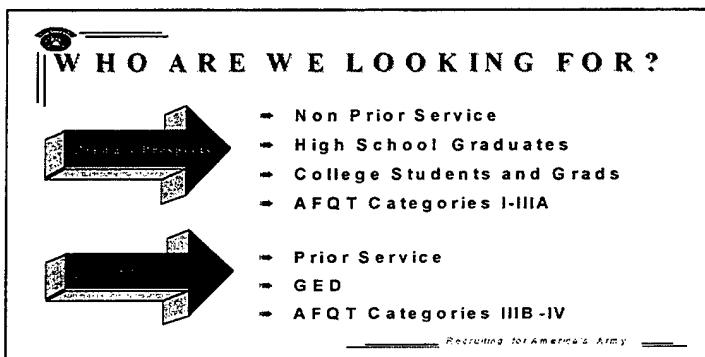


Chart provided by the Recruiting and Retention School

The target audience is not as large as some think. The available pool of potential recruits is shrinking; only 14 percent of the prime recruiting market of 17-21-year-old males are eligible and available for potential enlistments (see Figure 7). All military services along with colleges and the private sector are drawing from the same shrinking pool of potentially qualified young people.

**Figure 7.**  
**Prime Market (17-21-year-old males)**

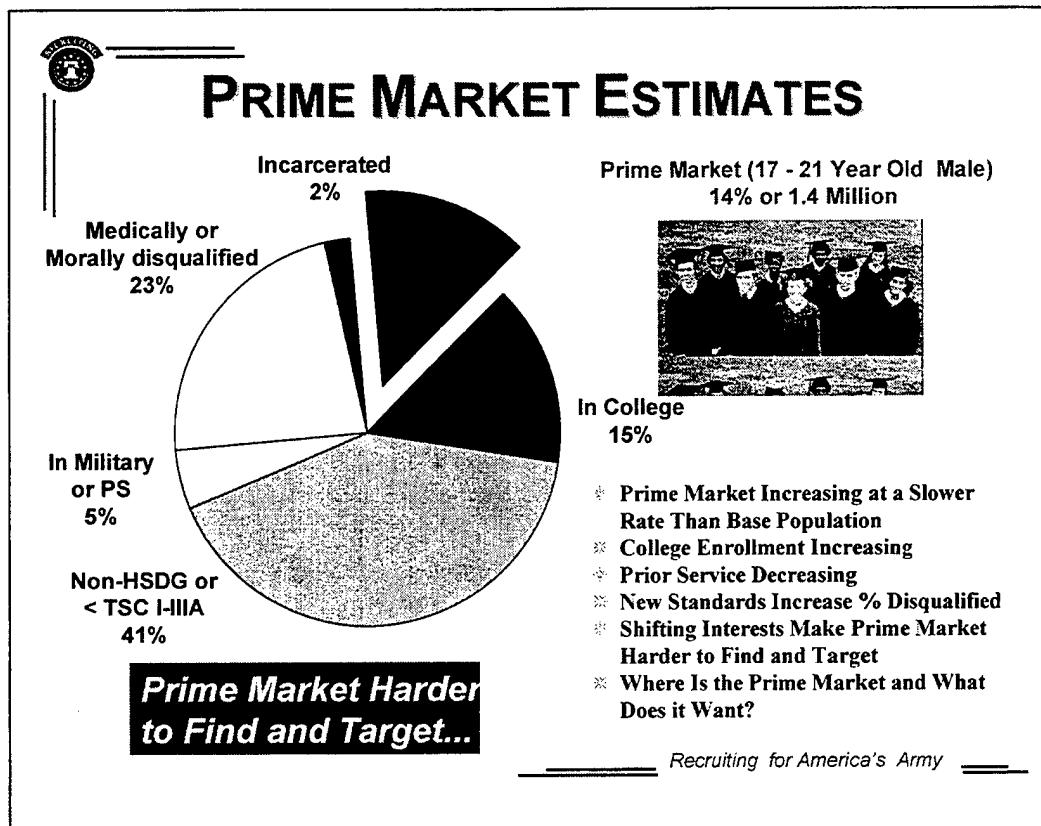


Chart provided by Recruiting and Retention School

### ***Recommendations***

- The Army should develop a marketing strategy aimed at educating kids about how the Army can provide just as many ways and means for them to achieve their desired goals. Use retirees and veterans who will speak publicly about the Army, thereby adding credibility to what recruiters are telling kids.
- The Army should develop an education and awareness campaign aimed at informing young people that the Army is good for all economic classes of America and that it is an honorable profession.
- USAREC should develop more commercials and literature showing the positive images and

the prestige of serving this great nation. Young people need to know that it is “cool” to enlist.

### **Influencers and Other External Factors that Impact Young Americans’ Decision to Enlist**

This section of the report will discuss the following influencers who have a great impact on young people’s decisions to enlist: Parents, school officials, friends and peers, celebrities, active-duty soldiers and their family members, and retirees. External factors at work during the 1990s that will also be addressed are: base closure/downsizing; marketing and advertisement; non-competitive pay, benefits and enlistment incentives; outdated Montgomery GI Bill; lack of public education about the Army’s role and the country’s National Military Strategy; and unofficial recruiters.

Many studies have been done to discover how to make it less difficult to increase the propensity to enlist. Difficulties could arise from changes in the attitudes of society and key *influencers* – such as parents, friends, school counselors, and others –who affect youths’ desire to join the military or the access given to recruiters to talk to youth about enlisting.<sup>11</sup> Additionally, the process of converting supply is influenced by broad societal attitudes toward the role, relevance, and stability of the military as an institution, which will affect the information youth will receive between the time they first consider enlistment and the time of their final decisions.<sup>12</sup>

Because young people tend to balance the positive messages relayed by recruiters with advice from someone they trust, we need to fully understand the role of influencers in their decision-making process. Youth Attitude Tracking Survey data, information from a previous Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies report, and my own research revealed that a key influencer,

motivating positive or negative propensity, is parents, and the most positive influencer is a father with prior military service. As the number of veterans of child-begetting age declines, the proportion of children with prior-military fathers also declines. Thus, a major source of positive encouragement and advice regarding military service appears to be gradually disappearing.<sup>13</sup>

For the most part, based on input I received from influencers and other factors, potential recruits have initial opinions about the military prior to recruiters' making contact. Parents, relatives, and retirees are the most important influencers, followed by school officials, friends, active-duty soldiers and their family members, and celebrities. These people have the greatest impact on young people's decision to enlist. (See figure 8)

**Figure 8.**  
**A Conceptual View of the Forces at Work in the Enlistment Process**

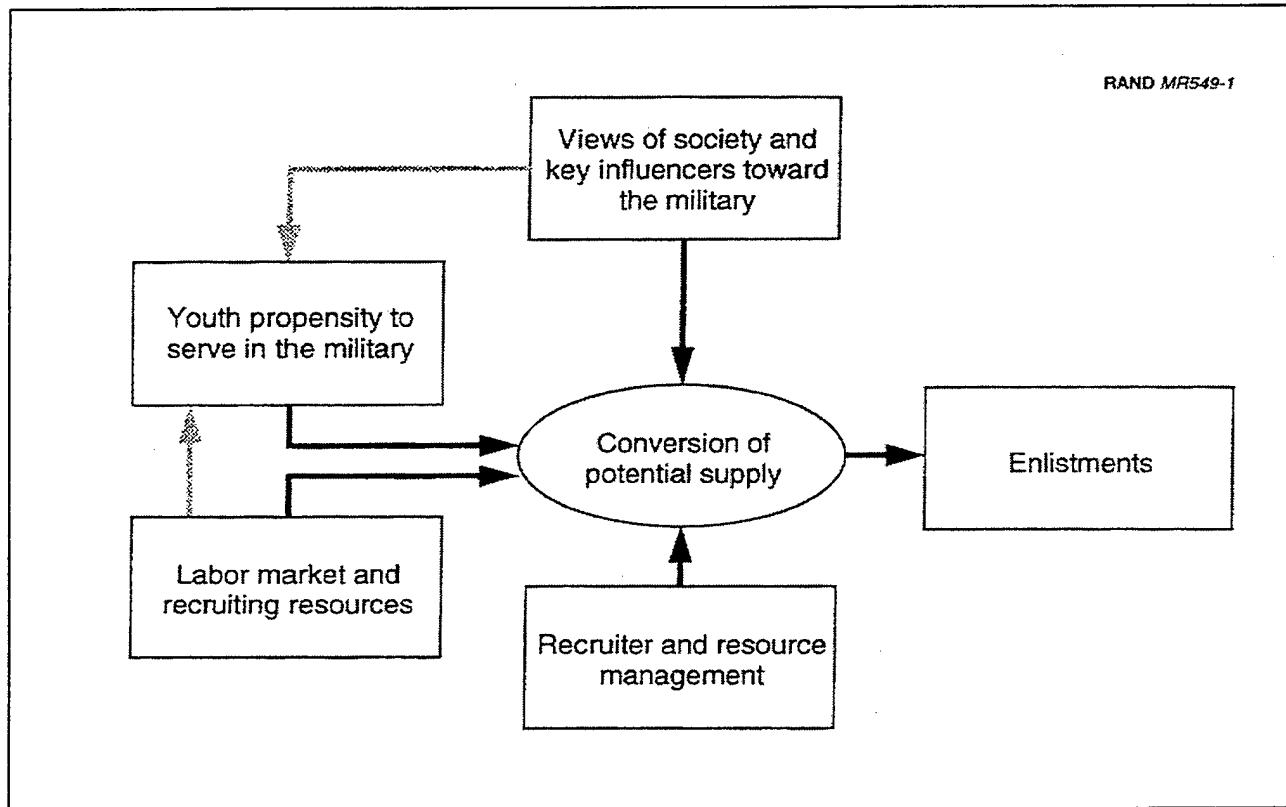


Table 4, below, shows who first talked about the Army with the 1,497 young recruits and potential recruits surveyed. Friends and family members were the two groups most likely to talk to young people about the Army first (62.6%). Together, their incidence was well over twice as high as the rate for recruiters. The 2.2 to 1 ratio makes it evident that influencers wield a lot of power.

**Table 4.**  
**“Who first talked to you about the Army?”**

School Officials	Recruiter	Family	Friends	TV ads	Other	Total	Influencer	Recruiter
9	452	569	369	39	59	1497	1006	452
0.6%	30.2%	38.0%	24.6%	2.6%	3.9%	100	67.2	30.2
<b>Ratio 2.2 to 1</b>								

Data collected from individuals processing through MEPS, Reception Battalion and AIT Battalion

“Other” includes: co-workers, movies, JROTC & acquaintances

## Influencers

### Parents (and Other Relatives)

Parents and other relatives are the most critical influencers in kids’ decision cycle. A growing number of them are not excited or largely interested in their kids’ joining the Army, which is causing young people to say no to enlisting and choose other post-high school options.

A large majority of the parents that I interviewed, including a lot of those currently in the military, stated that their first priority is for their kids to attend college. Furthermore, parents don’t want their children interrupting or deferring their education for the military.<sup>14</sup> It should not be a great surprise to find enlistment on the downward trend, because 172 (85.6%) out of 201 of the parents I interviewed and talked to on the Internet stated that they wanted their kids to go to college as a first option. The military option was very seldom mentioned and when it was mentioned it generally came after college and civilian employment.

While large numbers of parents are not in favor of their kids’ joining the Army, it is evident from table 5, below, that for the kids who do join the Army, their parents played an important role either by encouraging or supporting their decision to enlist.

**Table 5.**  
**“How do your parents feel about you joining the Army?”**

Pro	Con	Neutral	Total	Pro	Con
1193	139	165	1497		
79.7%	9.3%	11.0%	100		
					<b>Ratio: 8.6 to 1</b>

\*Data collected from individuals processing through MEPS, Reception Battalion and AIT Battalion

The US Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences has done research as well that confirms the finding that young men's views of their parents' receptiveness is the most important single influence in their enlistment decision making.<sup>15</sup> The Army research study did not include the influence on daughters, but my research did find that fathers are a major influence on daughters as well when they consider enlisting. Additionally, as stated above, the most positive influencer of all is a father with prior military service.<sup>16</sup>

It is important to understand the demographics of today's parents. Many of the parents of those currently in the target age group were affected by the Vietnam War; thus their children have little or no positive emotional connection to the military.<sup>17</sup> The Vietnam War was not a good experience for the nation as a whole and particularly for those directly or indirectly affected by it. Several parents who served in the military, or have friends who served, reminded me of the days when not only did they have to worry about the enemy, they also had to endure misguided anger and ridicule from Americans at home. These lingering feelings affect the way they feel about the Army and how they discuss the Army with their kids, relatives, or friends.

In sum, an increasing number of parents are not excited about their kids enlisting in the Army and don't feel that they have a role or responsibility to help recruit their kids, friends, relatives, or others.

### ***Recommendations***

- USAREC should send informational letters directly to high school students' parents, educating them on current Army benefits and enlistment incentives.
- USAREC should establish routine "show and tell" field trips for parents and other relatives to their local Army installations, to see Army life, first hand.
- USAREC should develop advertisement and marketing strategies aimed at getting parents and other relatives involved in recruiting. Use positive parents as key actors in recruiting commercials and ads.
- The Army needs to develop an internal program aimed at healing the wounds that persist in our Vietnam veterans. This may cause more of these individuals to talk more positively about the Army to young people and their influencers.

### **School Officials**

Input from former and current high school students, interviewed face-to-face and on the Internet, revealed that their school officials are key influencers and have great impact on their post-high school decisions. Students stated that adults at their schools are not promoting the Army or any service as a first option for quality kids, which is hurting the recruiting effort. Therefore, young people are not giving service in the military the same consideration they are giving to going to college or finding civilian jobs.

As stated above, school officials (particularly guidance counselors) play a crucial role in kids' decision making process. Guidance counselors are in a key position to be familiar with the

opinions of students, faculty, and parents. Besides their importance as opinion molders and potential friends or foes of recruiting, guidance counselors are valuable as the quickest source of student opinion. Gaining the cooperation and support of guidance counselors is one of the most important single steps in high school recruiting.<sup>18</sup>

Table 6 shows that only 9 percent (.6%) out of 1,497 members participating in this study stated that a school official first talked to them about joining the Army. Additionally, during personal and Internet interviews, 25 (71%) out of 35 teachers stated that kids should go to college first if they have the means to do so. This data should not come as a great surprise; it has been this way for a long time, but it is not good for recruiting.

**Table 6.**  
**“Who first talked to you about the Army?”**

School Officials	Recruiter	Family	Friends	TV adds	Other	Total	School Officials	Others
9	452	569	369	39	59	1497	9	1488
0.6%	30.2%	38.0%	24.6%	2.6%	3.9%	100	0.6	99.4
<b>Ratio 1 to 165</b>								

Data collected from individuals processing through MEPS, Reception Battalion and AIT Battalion  
 “Other” include, co-workers, movies, JROTC & acquaintances

The Armed Forces use public schools as their primary recruiting grounds, often with the enthusiastic cooperation of school districts, many of which allow them unlimited access.<sup>19</sup> While recruiters are allowed in a lot of schools, it does not mean that recruiting is important to school officials or their school programs. One sign of proof is that military recruitment has not appeared on the agenda of any national convention of educators in the past five years. This indicates that while high schools are of great concern to recruiters, recruitment is of relatively small concern to people who run the schools.<sup>20</sup> Additionally, because schools reflect the attitudes

of parents and the community, frequently the career planning completed during the four years of high school does not feature the military as a primary mainstream career decision.<sup>21</sup>

Given the fact the school officials are important in successfully recruiting high school seniors, it would be helpful if a great percentage of them had experienced some previous military service, which might cause them to be more inclined to promote the Army to their students.

Unfortunately, the number of school officials who have served in the military is dwindling. During this study period, I attended a Center of Influence (COI) briefing put on by the Commandant of the Retention and Recruiting School for 21 school officials. Only one of the 21 school officials present had any previous military service. As time passes, this will become even more of the norm. Moreover, while there were 21 school officials in attendance at the event, approximately 100 had been invited but did not attend due to other competing requirements. And while briefings of this nature are good, they need to be conducted at the local installations and include students.

Recruiting officials present at the North Atlanta Counselors Conference held in Williamsburg, VA, noted that while over 100 counselors attended, only three visited the Army's display area there. The poor attendance is just a further sign of the lack of interest in the military from school officials. As the numbers of counselors who have served in the Armed Forces continues to decline, so will the amount of first-hand personal knowledge and experiences counselors will have and be able to share with their students.

Clearly, the Armed Forces are competing with colleges and other post-high school institutions. Parents and schools are concerned that the time taken away from academics while serving in the military will diminish the students' desire to pursue higher education. This undermines parents' enthusiasm for the military option.<sup>22</sup> According to an official in the Recruiting Policy Branch of USAREC, most schools bar recruiters because they perceive the military to be incompatible with a college education. School systems in turn say that this perception is the parents'. They say parents want "better opportunities" for their children than the military.<sup>23</sup>

It is clear that, as in the past, the Army will continue to use high schools as a major source of recruitment, and therefore that the Army must ensure that school officials know that enlisting in the Army rates as a "first choice option" as opposed to an "if all else fails" option.

### ***Recommendations***

- USAREC should develop an awareness campaign aimed at educating school officials about the Army. This will help inform the increasing numbers of school officials who have not served in the military.
- The Army must continue to expose school officials to the Army by allowing them and their students to visit their local installations.
- The Army and USAREC should sponsor a recognition program for school officials who really support recruiting. It is key that these individuals be recognized publicly, so that they can motivate others to get involved with recruiting.

## **Friends and peers**

Friends and peers wield a great deal of influence on each other and that influence has impact on recruiting. Many of the friends and peers of potential recruits would not join the Army and would attempt to discourage others from enlisting. As table 7 shows, 735 (49.1%) out of 1,497 young people I interviewed stated that their friends were against their joining the Army.

**Table 7.**  
**“How do your friends feel about joining the Army?”**

Pro	Con	Neutral	Total	Pro	Con
533	735	229	1497	533	735
35.6%	49.1%	15.3%	100	35.6	49.1
					<b>Ratio: 1.4 to 1</b>

\*Data collected from individuals processing through MEPS, Reception Battalion and AIT Battalion

Several individuals stated that their friends said that if they “just had to” go into the service, they should join the Air Force, because smart kids with ambition first choose to join the Air Force, then the Marines, Navy, and Army, in that order.

Peer pressure is a powerful tool, which if harnessed could be effective in recruiting marketing strategies.

## ***Recommendations***

- USAREC must continue educating all youths on the benefits of joining the Army.
- USAREC should develop more ads showing friends joining the Army as teams.
- USAREC should develop commercials or other public media, showing kids who did not listen to negative advice from friends and how that was a good decision

## **Celebrities**

Popular celebrities, e.g. athletes, are not publicly promoting or discussing the Army with young people. If they did, it could help motivate today's youth, particularly if more celebrities had served. The young people I interviewed for this study felt that if the celebrities used in ads or commercials really felt that the Army was a good thing, they ought to have served themselves. However, as with other commercial goods or services, kids are often motivated to do and buy things based solely on what celebrities promote and not necessarily on what they do. Even celebrities who have not served in the Army could be helpful in marketing the Army. Secretary of Defense Cohen and his wife are right on track as they have approached about a dozen movie stars, film producers, and other celebrities to do public service announcements promoting the military on radio and television.<sup>24</sup>

## ***Recommendation***

- The Army should make great use of celebrities to make recruiting ads or commercials. They would be received better if they had previously served in the Army.

## **Active-Duty Soldiers and Their Family Members**

A surprising number of active-duty soldiers and their family members are not enthusiastically promoting the Army as a good career choice. I was repeatedly told by them that they do not think the Army is a great place at this time. This lack of enthusiasm is being noticed by the communities in which they live. Several times I was told that if the people who are currently in the Army say bad things about the Army, then it must be bad. This contributes to the declining propensity.

Soldiers and their family members are other influencers who have great impact on kids' decisions to enlist. Sixty-one percent of the soldiers and their family members (226 of 371) interviewed face-to-face and on the Internet stated that they would not encourage their children, relatives, or friends to join the Army. The main reasons cited for their discontent were: (1) The Army has changed and it's not the team that it used to be; (2) officers are more politicians than leaders; (3) everyone is just hanging on for retirement; (4) the Army has lost its purpose and it no longer takes care of its people and their family members; (5) TRI-CARE, the Army's health care system, is broken.

Research conducted by the U.S. Army Research Institute has found that the most important reasons enlisted soldiers are unhappy and leave the Army are: (1) amount of time separated from family; (2) overall quality of Army life; and (3) amount of pay (basic).<sup>25</sup> Recruiters confirmed the negative feelings among the active duty population, informing me that they have as hard a time, or harder, recruiting from active-duty families as they do from the civilian families. Several recruiters stated that active-duty parents are often somewhat hostile and do not want their kids to go through what they have gone through in the Army.

Additionally, several active-duty soldiers stated that "no one seems to know what is going on" in the Army. They feel left out and get most of their information about the Army or their lives from various news media. They are not very happy with this type of information flow, and it is causing them to be less than effective recruiters as well. Several soldiers stated that they would

be more inclined to promote the Army to the public if they had a clear picture of the Army and its future.

The feelings and thoughts of active - duty soldiers and their family members should really concern the Army leadership. After all, who could tell the Army story better than its currently serving members? As mentioned in this report, all soldiers are recruiters, and to that end, according to MG Timothy Maude (Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff of the Army for Personnel), “We should be talking to business leaders and talking to high school principals. We ought to be engaged in our local communities at the high schools.”<sup>26</sup> While Maude’s statements are well taken, such engagement will only occur if soldiers feel they are treated well while currently serving, and just as importantly when and if they decide to separate.

### ***Recommendations***

- The Army should develop a “chain teach” tool, to be used annually to update active duty soldiers and their families on what is going on in the Army.
- USAREC should develop tools that active-duty soldiers can use to talk to the public about constantly improving enlistment incentives.
- The Army should develop incentives and rewards for active duty soldiers who cause an applicant to enlist.
- The Department of Defense needs to fix the issues surrounding TRI-CARE.

### **Retirees**

Army retirees are not “happy campers,” and their dissatisfaction is affecting the recruiting effort. Retirees are key influencers, and how they feel they were treated while in or out of uniform will influence their input to young men and women who are considering enlisting in the Army.<sup>27</sup>

While young people have indicated that their parents and other relatives are the *individuals* who have the greatest impact on their post-high school decision, retirees as a *group* have the greatest impact on recruiting and retention. Every retiree is a potential recruiter – but what we don’t know is whether each retiree will be a good one or a bad one.”<sup>28</sup>

Unfortunately, many retirees have expressed great dissatisfaction over how they have been relegated to what they call a second-class citizenship immediately following their retirement. Based on interviews with 81 retirees -- members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, retirees attending a Retirement Appreciation Day at Fort Belvoir, VA, and other retirees-- I found that 56 (69%) of them felt they had been betrayed by a nation that they had served for many years. These feelings are precluding some of them from conscientiously encouraging their children or relatives to join the Army, in fear that they will receive the same treatment when and if they stay long enough to retire. Several participants in the study stated that their retiree relatives, friends, or acquaintances recommended against the Army. Again, this is not good for recruiting.

The restoration of promised lifetime health care for all military beneficiaries continues to be the greatest issue affecting the welfare of roughly 675,000 Army retirees.<sup>29</sup> Retirees have criticized their dental program as well because it doesn’t cover services they most likely will need.<sup>30</sup>

The frustration that many retirees feel over their health care benefits was captured in a November 1999 *Army Times* article, “Retirees, As Good as Prisoners.” In the article, an Air Force Master Sergeant (retired) proposed that military retirees be designated federal prisoners so they can get better medical treatment.<sup>31</sup> He argued that convicted felons get better medical and dental care from the federal government than Medicare-eligible military retirees.

It is critically important to “understand how keeping promises with yesterday’s soldiers affects not only today’s soldiers, but tomorrow’s as well.”<sup>32</sup>

### ***Recommendations***

- The Department of Defense should improve health care benefits for retirees.
- USAREC should develop recruiting commercials and ads using retirees to help sell the Army.
- The Department of Defense should improve “Space A” benefits for retirees.
- The Army should invite retirees to major training events to keep them linked to the modern Army.
- The Army should develop ways to show Army retirees that it honors their faithful service.

### **Impact of a Strong Economy on Recruiting**

While the impact of a strong economy could have been included in the category of “other factors” that affect recruiting, due to its importance I chose to present it here separately.

With very few exceptions, focus groups and other individuals confirmed the belief among young people that the current strong economy is providing many good jobs and an increased opportunity to attend college following high school. Repeatedly, I was told that there is no great need for young people to join the Army now, because of the many perceived opportunities that they have to choose from. Older people were echoing these thoughts as well. Therefore, it is no great surprise that young people are looking beyond the Army for viable post-high school options.

According to General Shinseki (chief of staff of the Army), “We (America) have allowed the youth of this country to believe that a strong economy is somehow unrelated to the strong, robust military forces we maintain.”<sup>33</sup> It is my opinion that America’s political leaders are responsible for educating the public on how a strong military and a strong economy are connected.

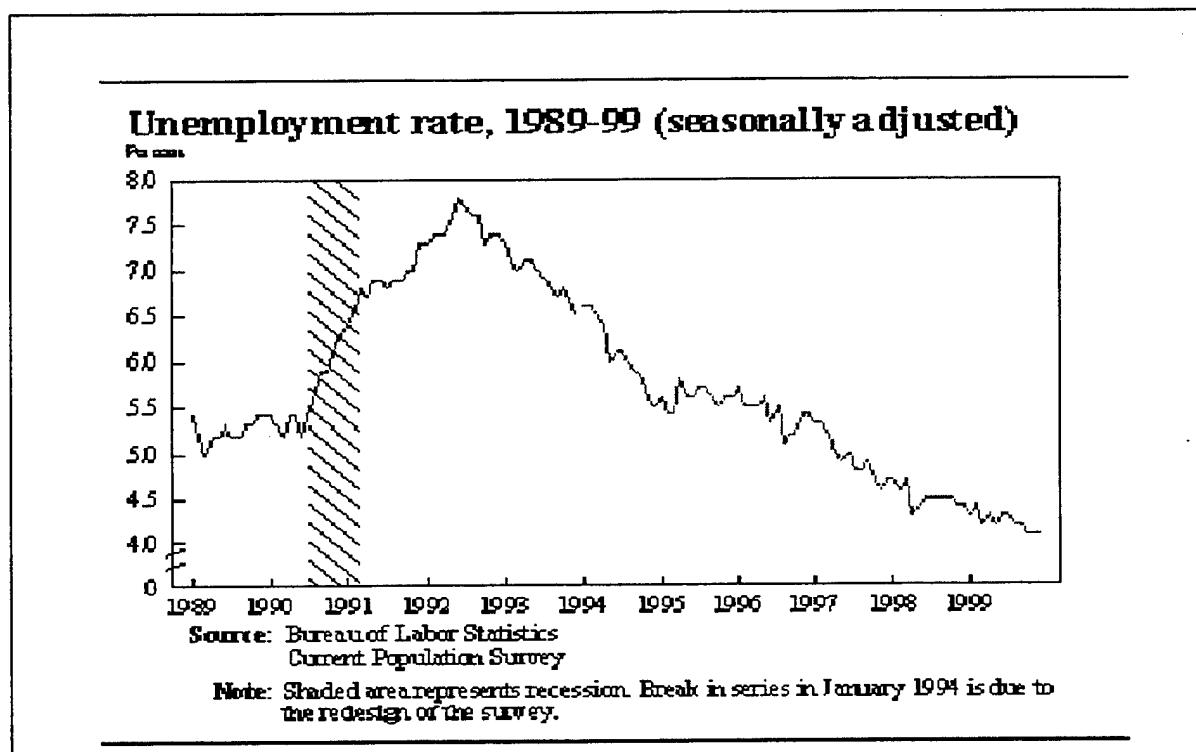
Ironically, good economic news spells further trouble for military recruiting. Low unemployment and continued growth in jobs are forcing companies to try harder to find workers, including offering improved pay and benefits. This means high school graduates who are not going to college – the key market for military recruiters – have more choices than joining the Army or any service.<sup>34</sup>

According to the Labor Department, unemployment in the United States fell to 4.1 percent in 1999, marking a 30-year low. And the nation is now in its seventh year of sustained economic growth.<sup>35</sup> These facts are causing many to accept the suggestion that, “Our real competition right now is the economy.”<sup>36</sup> In a statement to the Chamber of Commerce of Hawaii, General

Shinseki, stated, “Recruiting has been challenging because the economy is doing so well. But that’s OK – we are going to fill our ranks with the quality soldiers we need in spite of that great economy.”<sup>37</sup> This is the right way of thinking.

Figure 9 shows the unemployment rates for the last 10 years, which followed a continual decline after 1992. The low unemployment rate affects both potential recruits and their influencers. Parents with well paying jobs are better prepared to assist their kids with their future goals. It affects potential recruits, because it provides them with means to accomplish their immediate and future goals without enlisting in the Army or other services.

**Figure 9.**  
**Unemployment Rates, 1989 – 1999 (seasonally adjusted)**



While the overall unemployment rate ended 1999 at 4.1 percent, it is more important for recruiting to focus on the unemployment rate for those under age 25. Unemployment rates for youths ages 16-24 decreased to 10.1 percent in 1999 compared to 12.6 percent in 1996, which means more young people obtained jobs who might have otherwise enlisted in the Army (See Table 8).

**Table 8.**  
**Unemployment Rates for Young People (16-24)**

1996	1997	1998	1999
12.6%	11.4%	10.8%	10.1%

Data provided by the U.S. Department of Labor

The belief that successful recruiting is inherently linked to a bad economy only perpetuates the belief that the Army is a place to consider if there are no better options. The following statement made by Patrick T. Henry, Assistant Secretary of the Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, says it perfectly: "*America has to understand that we are not an employer of last resort.*" This thought must change in the minds of our young people and their influencers. Marketed correctly, Army recruiting should not be largely affected by a good economy. The successes of the Army should be marketed as one of the reasons why opportunities exist that caused America's economy to prosper in the first place.

It appears that the current strong economy is adversely affecting recruiting because, as the economy improved, the Army did not keep pace by improving its marketing strategy and incentive packages to compete with the job opportunities and incentive packages offered in the private sector.

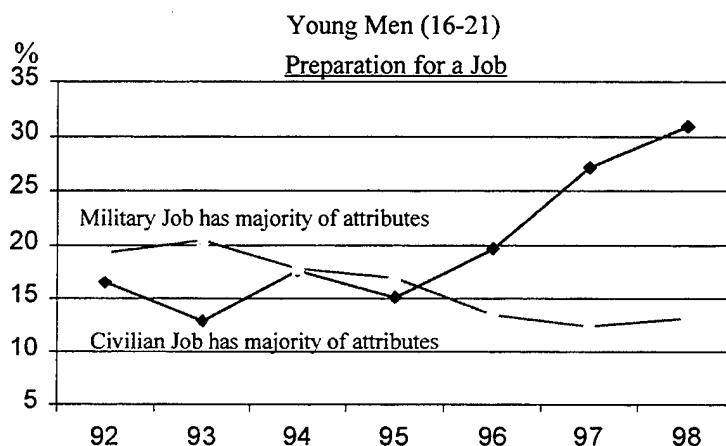
Young people are concerned about their future marketability; as such they consider options available to them that would better prepare them financially for the future. The charts below further break down young people's comparison of military and civilian jobs in terms of preparing them for a career. Figure 10 below shows that starting in 1996 there was a steady, gradual increase in men's belief that civilian jobs have more attributes than military jobs have that can help them in their future careers.

**Figure 10.**

**Civilian Job Attributes vs. Military Job Attributes: Preparation of Job (Men)**

## ATTRIBUTES: What is important to men?

Q: Are you more likely to get experience which prepares you for a future career in the military, a civilian job or both?

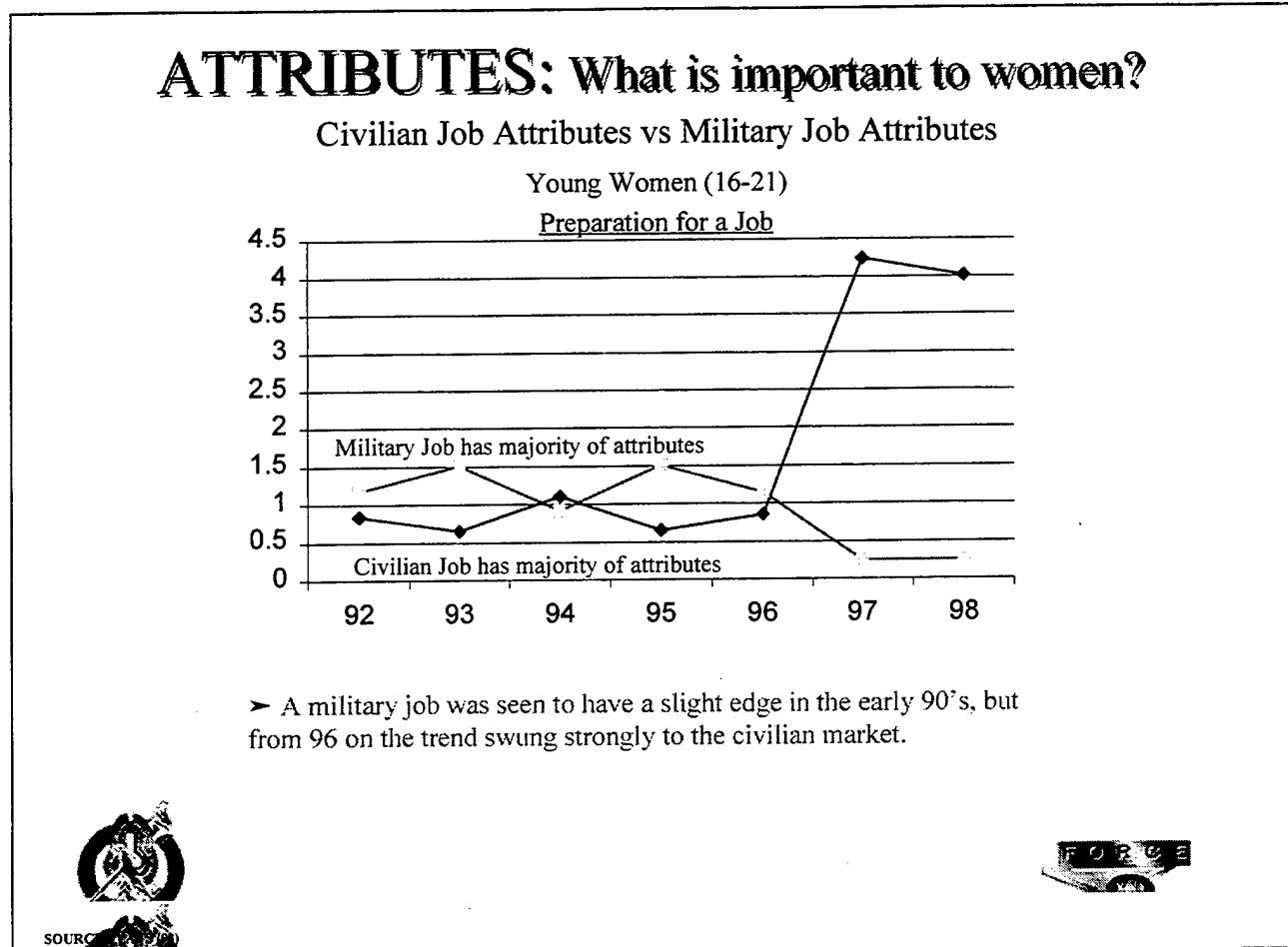


- In the early 90's the military had an edge, but from 96 on the trend went to the civilian market.



Figure 11 shows that starting in 1996, there was a big increase in women's belief that civilian jobs have greater attributes that will help them in obtaining future jobs.

**Figure 11.**  
**Civilian Job Attributes vs. Military Job Attributes: Preparation of Job (Women)**



**Data Provided by USAREC's YATS Manager**

In a plan to help recruiting, the Army has developed a new program titled, "Partnership for Youth Success," which became effective in the summer of 1999. Under this program, upon enlisting, recruits would be matched with a firm that needs their skills—skills they gain from their Army training and experience. After completing their enlistment, the soldiers would receive preferential hiring treatment from that firm. According to the assistant secretary for Manpower and Reserve Affairs (Patrick T. Henry), this new program would virtually guarantee good-paying jobs to soldiers after they complete at least one term of service.<sup>38</sup>

We must have a strong economy if we are to maintain a strong Army, and we must have a strong Army to ensure economic growth that is not challenged by potential enemies. Educating America about the link between a strong economy and a strong military is important.

### ***Recommendations***

- The Army should develop public awareness campaigns that inform the public of the conditions that a strong Army sets to ensure that the economy prospers.
- USAREC should develop a “show and tell” marketing campaign that shows the public that military jobs can and do prepare people for future civilian careers.
- The Army should do a thorough review of all incentives, benefits, and pay, and glide path these benefits to a level higher than the civilian sector.
- The Army should develop a national level advertisement campaign to continually educate the public about new Army programs.

### **Other External Factors Impacting on Recruiting in the 1990s**

The base closure and down-sizing initiatives have clearly impacted on recruiting. The base closure initiative significantly reduced the physical presence of the Army in certain areas, thus further removing the Army from the minds of the communities where they were located. Many people today still don't understand fully the benefits of closing various bases. All they experienced were the loss of jobs for themselves, relatives, and friends, which caused them and others to harbor bad feelings toward the military.

Only a few years ago, the Pentagon was slimming down (down-sizing) and had so many willing recruits that it raised its enlistment qualification standards. Now volunteers are in such short supply that the long-term viability of the United States' vaunted all-volunteer force is in question.<sup>39</sup> Down-sizing actually hurt the recruiting effort by sending the message that the Army was getting rid of a lot of people because it no longer needed so many. The "getting rid of" perception had a tremendous negative impact on how the public feels about the Army, and it sent the message that the Army was no longer a solid career choice. Table 9 shows the Army's personnel strengths during the down-sizing years, which dropped by 231,395 people (32.5%) between 1991 and 1999.

**Table 9. Draw-Down Years/Numbers**

FY	Army Total Strength	Enlisted Strength	Percent of Enlisted Force
1991	710821	602777	84.8%
1992	610450	511335	83.8%
1993	572423	480379	83.9%
1994	541343	452513	83.6%
1995	508559	422073	83%
1996	491103	406502	82.8%
1997	491707	408337	83%
1998	483880	401188	82.9%
1999	479426	398138	83%

Data provided by DCSPER Strength Forecast Office

### *Recommendations*

- The Department of Defense should use the news media to lay out for the public the benefits and savings that the base closure initiative netted.
- The Department of Defense should educate the public on the current purpose of the remaining bases and how they fit into the overall national defense.

- The Army should continue with plans to put additional Junior ROTC programs in the public schools. This will help increase the presence in the communities that were lost due to base closure.
- The Department of Defense should educate the American people on why the Army down-sized, if it still needs people.

## **Marketing and Advertisement**

Interviews conducted with face-to-face focus groups and Internet chat groups with 203 young and older Americans revealed that 161 people (79.3%) believe that Army advertising is missing the mark and is not appealing or motivating enough to encourage sufficient numbers of quality young people to enlist. (See Figure 12.)



Chart provided by the Recruiting and Retention School

Previous research conducted on this subject has shown that the single overarching goal of the young prospect is to find ways to be successful in life. Marketing and advertisement must clearly reflect the Army as a better or at least equal option compared with college and private sector employment for young people to meet their desired future goals.

The majority of the people surveyed (youth and older) agreed that current Army advertisements don't leave a lasting impression after being viewed. When I asked several individuals what Army commercials they most remembered, none came to mind. Infrequent commercials or ads are not enough to develop continuous and strong images of the Army in the minds of today's young people nor enough to create an interest in knowing more about the Army. The Army must continue to increase its marketing and advertisement budget, if it plans to get its share of the shrinking youth population. Table 10 reflects the Army's sporadic budget for marketing and advertisement. In FY 1996 the Army significantly increased this budget to improve recruiting; however, its marketing strategy did not change a lot, and this fact impacted on the actual number of additional recruits netted.

**Table 10.**  
**FY 89 – FY00 Marketing and Advertisement Budget (\$ millions)**

FY89	FY90	FY91	FY92	FY93	FY94	FY95	FY96	FY97	FY98	FY99	FY00
63.99	64.13	44.458	39.179	32.766	43.297	55.595	70.638	95.219	97.218	110.816	118.04

\* Data by USAREC

\*Numbers in millions

As technology continues to improve and more people use the Internet, there is a potential problem that the Army (Armed Forces) needs to be made aware of as it increases its use of the Internet for recruiting, marketing, and advertisement. During the study, I was surprised when several young people informed me that they made their final decision about the Army based on information obtained from the Internet. But too much information put on the Internet may allow potential recruits to make final decisions about joining the Army without a recruiter talking to them. Marketing and advertisement should be designed to "whet the appetite," motivating young people to seek out recruiters to obtain additional information. We want them to talk to us and not to computers.

As the Army continues to improve its marketing strategy, some thought needs to be given to the uniform that recruiters wear as they conduct their daily business in the communities. Kids and parents stated that they related better to the old fatigue uniform and now the battle dress uniform (BDU) as opposed the current semi-dressy uniform (green pants and shirt).

Additionally, several influencers felt that if the Army used more parents, retirees, etc., to participate in marketing and advertisement it would help recruiting by allowing young people to hear good things about the Army, other than what they hear from recruiters.

Finally, it is time for the Army's marketing and advertisement strategies to sell the *ARMY* and not just its benefits and what they can do for the prospective recruit. The Army must be seen as a highly reputable organization seeking qualified individuals to join the team, and that must be the main selling point.

### ***Recommendations***

USAREC should develop more commercials and ads focused on selling the benefits and challenges of being in the Army and the pride that comes with it rather than selling particular jobs (similar to the Marines).

- USAREC should develop advertisements depicting the Army as a better or equal option for young people to obtain their desired future goals.
- USAREC should develop ads targeting influencers, attempting to motivate them to support recruiting.
- USAREC should authorize recruiters to wear the BDU as a normal duty uniform.
- USAREC should use influencers in marketing and advertisements strategies.

### **Army Enlistment Incentives, Benefits, and Pay**

Enlistment incentives and benefits by themselves are not appealing enough to attract the required number of America's youth to fill personnel requirements. Experts say inducements such as signing bonuses have little impact in a growing economy. There are an increasing number of civilian businesses that are offering enticing benefits and incentives to attract the same population of America's youth that the Army (military) is pursuing. As a result of these efforts, an increasing number of young people who elect not to go to college are electing to pursue those jobs rather than joining the Army or other services. It was clear during interviews and focus group discussions that young people perceive that the benefits and pay are better in the private

sector, which is leading them not to enlist in the Army. The operative word is “perceive,” because these young people had not done a complete cost/benefits comparison between the Army and the private sector’s bottom-line pay and benefits.

While efforts are ongoing to find the right mix of pay and incentives to motivate more young people to enlist, my research revealed that 76.9 percent of the young people who joined or were in the process of joining the Army did so for pay, benefits, and enlistment incentives. The remaining 23.1 percent joined for a variety of other reasons (see Table 11).

**Table 11.**  
**“What attracted you to the army?”**

								Training,
College \$	Training	Pay	Patriotism	Discipline	Benefits	Total	and Benefits	Patriotism, & Discipline
389	217	126	42	87	636	1497	1151	346
26.0%	14.5%	8.4%	2.8%	5.8%	42.5%	100.0	76.9	23.1
							<b>Ratio: 3.2 to 1</b>	

Data collected from individuals processing through MEPS, Reception Battalion and AIT Battalion

While the Army continues to improve its incentive programs to make the Enlistment Bonus program (EB), Army College Fund (ACF) program, and the Loan Repayment Program (LRP) more attractive to potential youths, they by themselves will not be enough to entice today’s youths, who are savvier than in the past.<sup>40</sup> Table 12 shows the relatively small number of recruits who enlisted for the EB, ACF, and the LRP.

**Table 12. Percentage of Elistments Who Received EB, ACF, or LRP Incentives, 1997-1999**

	FY 97	FY98	FY99
Enlisted Bonus (EB)	13%	20%	17%
Army College Fund (ACF)	15%	17%	12%
Loan Repayment Program (LRP)	3%	5%	3%

Data provided by PERSCOM

Young people perceive that they have greater job opportunities and more college loans available to them in the civilian sector, therefore the Army's incentives and benefits are not as attractive as they were in the past. "We are reaching the point of diminishing returns," says Bruce Orvis, an analyst at Rand. "I don't think that we can *buy* our way out this." The new assistant defense secretary, Alphonso Maldon Jr., validated Orvis' statement by saying that the pay and benefits increases passed by Congress will not solve critical manning problems. He stated, "Pay improvement alone will not resolve all current concerns. It will take time and significant efforts."<sup>41</sup>

As many initiatives are being developed and put into place, the Army needs to be aware that during this study, several individuals stated that there is a growing perception within the civilian sector that the Army must really be getting desperate, since it keeps increasing the benefits. While increasing pay and benefits are prudent business practices, the Army needs to be aware that these improvements are being received both positively and negatively. Several times throughout this research I was told by civilians, active-duty soldiers, and retirees, that something

must be “really getting bad” in the Army, and that is why the Army is offering increased pay and benefits.

## **Incentives**

*Enlistment bonuses (EB).* The enlistment bonus is a monetary incentive offered to qualified individuals who enlist in the Regular Army for duty in a specific Military Occupational Skill (MOS). The bonus amount ranges from \$1000 to \$20,000. Several respondents stated that \$20,000 would not be a sufficient amount of money to entice them if they were at least thinking about enlisting anyway. Many respondents suggested that the Enlisted Bonus is not as appealing as it once was in the past, due to the perception that the current strong economy is providing many good jobs with improved pay and benefits.

*Army College Fund.* The Army College Fund is designed to provide money for recruits to use to attend college after completing their term of service. This is a solid program, but unfortunately it appears to be increasingly easy for young people to secure financial assistance for a college education without being obligated to a long commitment such as what is required from the Army. Table 9 shows the low number of recruits who enlist for this benefit. The booming economy, increased endowments, and roughly \$64 billion in financial aid in 1999 are all clearly drawing potential recruits away from the Army and its educational benefits. Additionally, states have spent billions building vast community college systems – giving millions more high school graduates access to post-secondary education.<sup>42</sup>

Today, about 80 percent of high school seniors plan to attend a four-year college, up from 50 percent in 1976, according to the University of Michigan's annual Monitoring the Future study<sup>43</sup>. According to military sociologist Charles Moskos, more than 60 percent of high school students do attend post-high school educational institutions, up from 45 percent 20 years ago.<sup>44</sup> An increasing number of high school seniors don't see the military as a way to attend college, according to David R. Segal, a military sociologist at the University of Maryland College Park. Rather, he says, "They see it as a detour from College."<sup>45</sup>

The Army is working now to get back its share of quality young people. It has announced a major change, making cash bonuses available to recruits who enlist for the Army College Fund, which features payments of \$26,000 to \$50,000 for enlistment of two, three, four years or more.<sup>46</sup> Prior to this change in November 1999, federal law prohibited potential recruits from receiving both cash bonuses and the Army College Fund. Starting in November 1999, they were eligible for both enlisted bonuses and the Army College Fund.

Additionally, the Army has developed a new test program, the "College First" program. It offers college-bound men and women the option to enlist, attend college, get their two-year degree, and then serve a term of service in the Army. The Army will sponsor up to two years of post-secondary education at a junior or vocational college while the individual serves in the Army's Delayed Entry Program (DEP) or in drilling reserve status.

*Loan Repayment Plan.* The Loan Repayment Plan repays federally funded loans for individuals who enlist for a minimum of three years, not to exceed \$65,000. It is a good program for

attracting college-market youth. Although young people desire to rid themselves of any college debts, many of those interviewed expressed two major concerns with regard to joining the Army: (1) the long obligation to serve and to be potentially put in harm's way; and (2) the fear that a long delay in entering the job market could cause their acquired knowledge and skills to age beyond relevant use, when they return to the private sector.

### **Army Benefits**

There are indications that the Army, along with other services (excluding the Marines), may be missing the mark on getting our youth's attention. While Army benefits like money, travel, job experience, retirement benefits, etc., can be attractive, they are not attractive enough to entice sufficient numbers of today's youth. Many of today's youth believe that they currently have more opportunities outside of the Army that offer similar benefits.

The benefits offered by the Army are also available, to some degree, in the private sector. However, among those who have joined the Army, benefits were cited as the most enticing incentive (see Table 13). Based on my interviews, there is nevertheless a general perception that the Army has significantly reduced its benefits, thereby making the Army less attractive to both young people and those who serve as their influencers. Most of the individuals interviewed could not specify which benefits they believed had been reduced and appeared to be operating on hearsay.

**Table 13.**  
**“What attracted you to the Army?”**

								Training, Patriotism, & Benefits
College \$	Training	Pay	Patriotism	Discipline	Benefits	Total	& Benefits	
389	217	126	42	87	636	1497	636	861
26.0%	14.5%	8.4%	2.8%	5.8%	42.5%	100.0	42.5%	57.5
Ratio: 1 to 1.4								

\*Data collected from individuals processing through MEPS, Reception Battalion and AIT Battalion

In comparing Army benefits with benefits offered for some of the entry-level jobs at selected major retail and other employers that are available to young people, it appears that other organizations are faring as well as the Army (see Table 14, where an "X" means that business provides the benefit in some form.) However, unlike the Army, not all companies provide initial entry-level employees all the benefits until a specified period of time has elapsed, which is normally 90 days to a year. Additionally, unlike the Army, these benefits are provided on a cost-share basis. For example, Walmart provides its benefits only after the employee has been employed for at least 90 days and at a shared cost. The same applies to Food Lion Grocery Stores.

**Table 14.  
Benefits Comparison**

	Medical	Dental	Retirement	Life Insurance	Profit/Shares Option	Paid Vacation	Annual Bonus	Tuition Assistance
US Army	X	X	X	X		X		X
UPS	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Postal	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Food Lion	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Wal-Mart	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
McDonalds	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Denny's	X	X				X		
Radio Shack	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

*Military pay*. Military pay has not kept pace with the private sector. This too is clearly causing young people to pursue other career options that have less stringent rules and regulations, minimum personal sacrifices, greater stability, and minimum separation from family members. Participants in this study stated that Army pay is too low. Several times they asked me why some soldiers were living on food stamps. Table 15 highlights that only 126 (8.4%) out of 1,497 stated that they enlisted for the pay. Army pay is clearly not what is attracting today's youth.

**Table 15.**  
**"What attracted you to the Army?"**

College \$	Training	Pay	Patriotism	Discipline	Benefits	Total	Pay	Others
389	217	<b>126</b>	42	87	636	1497	<b>126</b>	<b>1371</b>
26.0%	14.5%	<b>8.4%</b>	2.8%	5.8%	42.5%	100.0	<b>8.4</b>	<b>91.6</b>
<b>Ratio: 11 to 1</b>								

Data collected from individuals processing through MEPS, Reception Battalion and AIT Battalion  
 "Other" includes: co-workers, movies, JROTC & acquaintances

A staff officer assigned to HQDA was right on the mark when he floated the million-dollar question: "What amount of pay could be "adequate" for those who serve in our nation's military?" From the taxpayer's perspective, however, adequate pay is the minimum amount required to keep the military ranks filled with capable and qualified personnel.<sup>47</sup> During this research, it became evident to me that too many Americans do not see a need to pay high salaries to a large standing Army, particularly when they don't see how doing otherwise would adversely affect soldiers' quality of life.

While better pay may not solve the recruiting problem, ignoring the issue could worsen it. It has been suggested that the U.S military follow suit with the British and use an "X Factor" to offer additional compensation to service members for things their civilian counterparts do not have to

deal with. Examples include but are not limited to: (1) working longer hours; (2) putting one's health and life at risk; (3) carrying out no-notice deployments; and (4) enduring frequent moves.<sup>48</sup>

### ***Recommendations***

- The Army should continue to review and update pay, benefits, and enlistment incentives to ensure that they are more attractive and lucrative than in the civilian sector.
- The Army should regularly inform the public about the constantly improving benefits.
- When determining adequate military pay, the Army should use an "X factor."
- USAREC should increase awareness of the new College First Program.
- USAREC should conduct benefits-to-cost analyses comparing Army benefits and pay to those in the private sector, and should use this information in advertisement strategies so young people can make better informed decisions.

### **The GI Bill**

Focus groups and individual interviews confirmed that the GI Bill is not as attractive to young Americans as in the past. It has not kept pace with the cost of college tuition. The GI Bill was once a great selling tool for the Army. "The GI bill made America into the best-educated country in the world," military historian Stephen E. Ambrose once told Congress. In 1984, 11 years after the United States scrapped the military draft, Rep. G.V. "Sonny" Montgomery, D-Mass., resurrected the GI Bill. The new version helped draw in a generation of smart, motivated volunteers, who consistently cite college money as a chief reason they joined up.<sup>49</sup>

Today's youths understand that their desires for larger incomes are linked to a college degree. To that end they are pursuing college as a first choice, as opposed to joining the military. More young people know that they will make more money if they go to college, more people have more money to send their kids to college, and federal and private financial aid programs that aren't tied to military service have expanded. Military sociologist Charles Moskos has called this new phenomenon "the GI Bill without the GI."<sup>50</sup> Because the private sector is recruiting from the same population as the Army, businesses have established their own "GI Bill," one that is not as time consuming as the military's. Some consideration is being given to modifying the provisions of the GI Bill program to make it more attractive. Senator Max Cleland, (D-Ga) is currently working on legislation he says will bring the GI Bill educational benefits into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### ***Recommendations***

- Continue to review the cost of a college education and adjust the GI Bill benefits to ensure that they are more attractive than what is being offered in the private sector.
- USAREC's advertisement campaigns should advertise that the money received from the GI Bill does not have to be repaid, unlike student loans.

### **Public's Relationship and Education of the Army**

Focus groups and individual interviews confirmed that young people and the general public do not understand the roles and missions of the Army nor are they overly enthusiastic about the Army. This, coupled with continuous negative press, is hurting recruitment. The following

statement made years ago seems to be as true today as it was then: "Despite the fact that the nation was born in warfare and has engaged in it frequently since that time, military institutions in the past have been significant in national life only in wartime."<sup>51</sup> This sentiment is also reflected in a statement made by one of the parents in a previous study on recruiting, who said, "I truly question the relevancy of being in the military today".<sup>52</sup>

There is a growing rift between the Army and the public. Too many Americans don't understand the Army's current role or the nation's National Military Strategy. Regarding national defense, most Americans think that it is important for the country, but not that important, according to a September 1999 Hart and Teeter opinion poll. In that poll, people were asked to rank various issues of interest to them, and national defense ranked number 12, behind education, health care, Social Security, crime, moral values, health care for the poor and elderly, the federal budget, tax reform, jobs, and illegal drugs. The survey results help to show why pro-defense members of Congress are having trouble selling their colleagues on significant increases in military spending.<sup>53</sup>

During the 1990s, as compared with pre-1990, there have been significant changes in the military and its missions and roles. The most recognizable change in the decade since the Berlin Wall fell is the military's size – fewer troops, fewer weapons, and fewer bases.<sup>54</sup> Unfortunately, what is not well known among the American public is the fact that the military is doing more with less and is now in more places than before the Wall fell. When the wall came down on Nov 9, 1989, the Soviet Union was the focal point of the U.S. military's structure, planning, and thinking.<sup>55</sup> Most Americans understood the threat of the Soviet Union and, therefore, were willing to put

themselves and their kids potentially in harm's way to contain Soviet aggression. However, now that the threat is gone, a lot of the people I interviewed appear not to understand the need to have such a large Army or other service.

The changing role of the U.S. Army in a post-Cold War world, with its newer humanitarian and peace-keeping missions, has been suggested by some observers to have made Army service much less attractive. As the Cold War and the Gulf War have given way to peacekeeping missions of uncertain duration in unattractive locales, a career in uniform has become a much harder sell.<sup>56</sup> Today, American forces operate in obscure places such as East Timor, Haiti, Kosovo, Bosnia and many other places that are not attractive to America's youth, reducing their desire to enlist. As Defense Secretary Cohen, said, "Within a very short period of time we had more people involved in more deployments, of longer duration, of a greater variety ... than ever before."<sup>57</sup> (See Figures 12 and 13, which illustrates the deployment of U.S. Forces since 1950).

Testifying in November 1999 before the House Armed Services Personnel Subcommittee, members of the U.S. Commission on National Security in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century said the military may have trouble filling the ranks with the number and quality of people it needs. Among other key issues, they stated that the gap between the military and the American public is likely to grow because fewer citizens will be veterans.<sup>58</sup> One member of the Commission stated that weaker public understanding of what the military does will affect the supply of potential recruits.<sup>59</sup>

The following statement made in a previous report is still valid today: "While the military and American society have traditionally had a distant relationship, American 'elites' – intellectual,

political, business and financial - are more distanced today than ever from the military". Fewer and fewer of these groups have had or will have had personal experience with the military. Many in these groups who came of age in the 60's and early 70's view the military with a certain amount of distaste, and their interests tend to be on issues that do not involve the military.<sup>60</sup> This too is not good for recruiting.

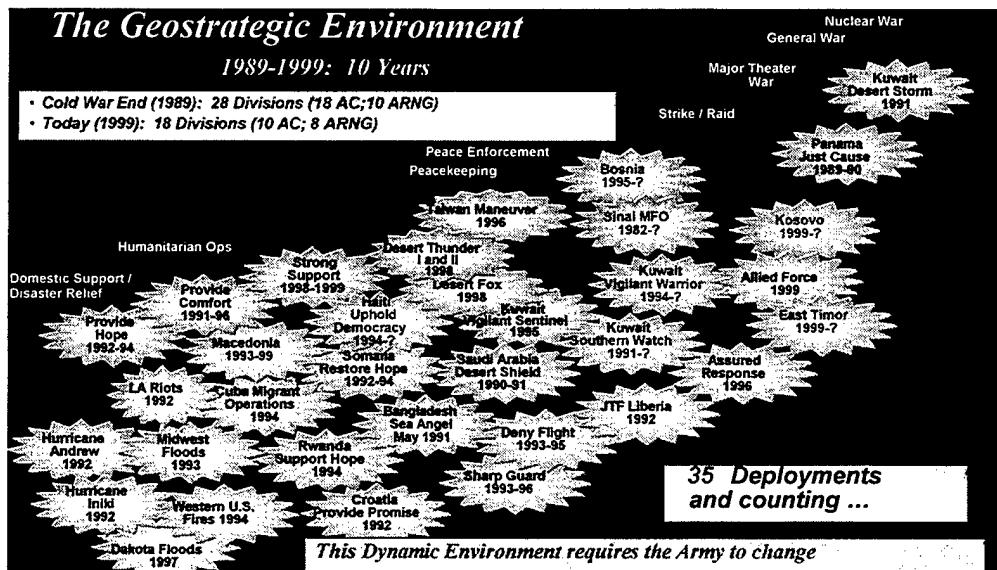
The public clearly does not understand America's interest in many of its deployments since the Berlin Wall fell. The lack of understanding about the Army and its roles is affecting potential recruits' decision to enlist as well as affecting their influencers' willingness to encourage them to enlist.

**Figure 12. U. S. Deployments Before the Berlin Wall Came Down (1950-1989)**



Data provided by DCSOPS

**Figure 13. U. S. Deployments after the Wall Came Down (1989-1999)**



It has been said that one of the main reasons America's youths are not joining the Army is the lack of education about the nation's National Military Strategy (NMS). While the lack of education about military strategy is harming enlistment, it is having an even greater effect on the older generation, the influencers. These influencers (parents, retirees and others) are concerned about what they perceive to be complete lack of national strategy, to the point of asking the big question, "Why should their sons and daughters be put in harm's way?" Based on input from participants of this study, it seems that while most don't know what the strategy is, even among those that do, the issue appears to be that they just don't agree with it.

It is clear to the people that I interviewed, including active duty soldiers, retirees, young people, and other civilians, that the Army must be able to perform all of its missions. But the big question remains: What is the mission? As currently stated, the National Military Strategy requires that the Army be able to fight and win two nearly simultaneous major theater wars and

also be able to execute a full spectrum of operations. This spectrum includes domestic disaster relief, humanitarian assistance, peacekeeping and peacemaking, sanctions enforcement, show-of-force operations, and limited conventional conflict.<sup>61</sup> Ten years ago, keeping the peace meant preventing the outbreak of World War III, and avoiding a nuclear conflict with the Soviet Union.<sup>62</sup> Today, peacekeeping means deploying American forces to many unfamiliar places to perform the broad mission described above.

The long period of peace for our country has caused a lot of Americans to become too comfortable and secure, to see the need for a large and strong Army. General Shinseki's statement was right on the mark when he said, "To think that our leadership in the world, politically, economically, and informationally, has little or nothing to do with the quality of the armed forces we maintain in a deployed status is a bit short-sighted."<sup>63</sup>

Input from participants overwhelmingly confirmed that negative press is also a source of their knowledge about the Army, leaving a bad impression that also hurts recruiting. Reported negative incidents, such as violations of equal opportunity, poor race relations, and fraternization problems that occur in the Army continue to hurt the recruiting effort. The Department of Defense (DOD) does not aggressively explain to the American people what exactly occurred in these reported episodes.

### ***Recommendations***

- The Army should use the news media to routinely update the American public about the Army and its roles.

- Department of Defense and political leaders need to educate the public on America's National Military Strategy.
- The Army should establish regular "open house" days at Army installations, for the public to see the inside of the Army first-hand.
- The Army or DOD must take the offensive and tell the American people about the good things that the Army is doing, using newspapers, TV, and the Internet as media tools.
- The Department of Defense or the Army must respond to negative media reporting. Responses should not be defensive, but explanatory.

### **Unofficial Recruiters**

The secretary of the Army and chief of staff of the Army fully understand that recruiters alone cannot solve the recruiting challenge facing today's Army. General Shinseki (CSA) has stated that recruiting is so critical to readiness that it is his number-one task.<sup>64</sup> Clearly, we need more people other than recruiters talking positively about the Army and selling the Army to the public at every opportunity. To that end, General Shienseki and Secretary of the Army Louis Caldera have dubbed every soldier a recruiter.<sup>65</sup> More unofficial recruiters are required to help solve the recruiting challenge that faces today's Army. Unofficial recruiters, at a minimum, ought to include all those influencers cited in this report.

There is a declining trend of positive feelings toward the Army and the Armed Forces as a whole in civilian communities, and this is having a tremendous impact on youth's desire to enlist. It is not a topic that is discussed very often in any major public forums, in schools, or even around the dinner table. High school counselors, retirees, veterans of foreign wars (VFW) members, and

other influential civilian leaders could be a great help to recruiting if more of them were actively promoting the Army. Active Army members could also be great recruiters, although they themselves must be convinced that the Army has taken good care of them. This statement by the Army's assistant deputy chief of staff for personnel, in a recent *Army Times* article, is right on track. In this article he stated that, "we want them (active duty soldiers) to be proud of the organization, to believe in it, to wear the uniform in public, and to speak proudly of the advantages and opportunities of being a soldier."<sup>66</sup>

It is absolutely critical that everyone, at all levels, get involved in what senior Army leadership have publicly stated is their number-one priority: recruiting.

### ***Recommendation***

- The Army should develop incentive programs that will motivate influencers to proactively get involved in promoting the Army.
- USAREC should develop incentives or other recognition for active-duty soldiers and others whose recruiting effort leads to an actual enlistment.
- USAREC should develop commercials using retirees and veterans to target influencers, asking for their help with recruiting.

## V. Conclusion

Influencers and other external factors listed in the report are affecting young people's decision to enlist. The problems must be addressed now, and continually, if the volunteer Army is to survive. America must sustain its position of military power, and to accomplish this it must have a constant influx of new recruits.

Input from influencers is very important to young people as they consider post-high school options. My research validated the importance of influencers in the overall recruiting efforts and led to some specific recommendations as to what should be done to cause them to be more inclined to promote the Army to their children, relatives, and friends. It is absolutely essential that parents, school officials, celebrities, retirees, active-duty soldiers, and family members be active members of the Army's recruiting team. Keeping influencers connected to the Army, through educating them about America's National Military Strategy, the Army's roles and missions, and the benefits that it provides young people, will help them view the Army in a more positive light.

I have also identified the impact that other factors listed in this report have on young people's decisions to enlist and to make recommendations that would reduce their harmful impact on recruiting. Addressing these issues will help both potential recruits and their influencers better understand the Army, thereby allowing them to make better informed decisions about enlisting.

The Army offers many benefits designed to entice young people to enlist that are being challenged by the belief that equal or better benefits are available in the current job market. The

Army needs to make sure that young people and their influencers truly understand the cost of its benefits as compared to the cost of Army benefits provided by the private sector. I believe once these cost comparisons are made, young people and their influencers will view the Army as a better or equal option for achieving their long-term goals.

I believe that recruiting will make a positive turn-about if greater emphasis is put toward understanding the underrated impact that influencers and other influences have on America's youth. While the effects of targeting the influencers and influences will not initially win the close battle, with a properly devised strategy they could create the opportunity to win the deep battle. Influencers and influences are key to the recruiting efforts and will continue to play a critical role in increasing our youth's propensity to serve in the Army. Addressing these influencing factors could result in more of America's youths saying YES to life in the Army, for one enlistment or for a career.

## **Endnotes**

<sup>1</sup> Greg Jaffe, "The Military Wages Uphill Battle to Find the Willing Able." *The Wall Street Journal*, September 23 1999

<sup>2</sup> Roy D. Nord, Edward J. Schmitz, and Thomas A. Weiland, *Propensity and the Enlistment Decision*. Alexandria, VA: U. S Army Research Institute for the Behavioral Social Sciences.

<sup>3</sup> Jacob Alex Klerman and Lynn A. Karoly, *Trends and Future Direction in Youth Labor Markets: Implications for Army Recruiting*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1994.

<sup>4</sup> William J. Green, "Recruiting: Past, Present, and Future." Report of the Young & Rubicam Army Group. Undated.

<sup>5</sup> Green, "Recruiting: Past, Present and Future."

<sup>6</sup> Klerman et al., *Trends and Future Direction in Youth Labor Markets*.

<sup>7</sup> Brady Graham, "Key Senator Backs 18-Month Enlistment." *Washington Post*, March 18, 1999.

<sup>8</sup> Jaffe, "The Military Wages Uphill Battle to Find the Willing Able."

<sup>9</sup> Beth J. Asch and Bruce R. Orvis, *Recent Recruiting Trends and Their Implications: Preliminary Analysis and Recommendations*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND.

<sup>10</sup> Jaffe, "The Military Wages Uphill Battle to Find the Willing Able."

<sup>11</sup> Bruce R. Orvis, Narayan Sastry, and Laurie L. McDonald, *Military Recruiting Outlook: Recent Trends in Enlistment Propensity and Conversion of Potential Enlisted Supply*. Report by RAND prepared for the U.S. Army, Office of the Secretary of Defense, 1999.

<sup>12</sup> Asch et al., *Recent Recruiting Trends and Their Implications*.

<sup>13</sup> Statement by Colonel Holaday, Deputy Director for Accession Policy, Assistant Secretary of Defense. for Force Management Policy, accessed from the Internet, November 1999.

<sup>14</sup> Jane McHugh, "Interview with Recruiting Policy Services: Take Aim at High Schools That Snub Recruiters." *Army Times*, September 27, 1999

<sup>15</sup> U. S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences, *Enlistment Decision Model*. Accessed on the Internet at <http://www-ari.army.mil/enlistpb.tm>.

<sup>16</sup> Marland Buckner, David Bositis, Alan Gropman, and Milton Morris, *African Americans and the Downsizing Military: "A Declining Propensity to Serve*. Report by the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, prepared for the Human Resources Division, U.S. Department of the Army, 1996.

<sup>17</sup> Jaffe, "The Military Wages Uphill Battle to Find the Willing Able."

- 
- <sup>18</sup> John M. Buck, *High School Recruitment for a Volunteer Army*. Report by Development Alternatives, Inc. (Washington DC) prepared for the Chief of Staff, U.S. Department of the Army, February 1972.
- <sup>19</sup> "Working Against Military Recruitment in High School." Accessed from the Internet October 1999.
- <sup>20</sup> "Help from Hollywood," *Army Times*, February 14, 2000.
- <sup>21</sup> Judith Lee Ladd, President of the American School Counselor's Association, "Opening the School Doors for Recruiters." July 1999 report, accessed from the Internet October 1999.
- <sup>22</sup> Ladd, "Opening the School Doors for Recruiters."
- <sup>23</sup> McHugh, "Interview with Recruiting Policy Services."
- <sup>24</sup> "Help from Hollywood."
- <sup>25</sup> Sean D. Naylor, "Growing Dissatisfaction with Army Life," *Army Times*, December 13, 1999
- <sup>26</sup> SFC Connie E. Dickey, "Shinseki devises recruiting strategy to help meet goal." *Belvoir Eagle*, (newspaper of Fort Belvoir, VA), December 9, 1999.
- <sup>27</sup> "Strengthen Link Between Retirees and Recruits." *AUSA News*, July 1999. Accessed on the Internet October 1999 at <http://www.ausa.org.htm>.
- <sup>28</sup> "Strengthen Link Between Retirees and Recruits."
- <sup>29</sup> "Retirees." *AUSA News*, July 1999. Accessed on the Internet October 1999 at <http://www.ausa.org.htm>.
- <sup>30</sup> Deborah Funk, "Congress May Expand Dental Benefits for Reservist, Retirees." *Army Times*, October 1999.
- <sup>31</sup> "Retirees, as Good As Prisoners." *Army Times*, November 29, 1999.
- <sup>32</sup> "Retirees." (*AUSA News*, July 1999.)
- <sup>33</sup> Speech given by General Shinseki, Chief of Staff of the Army, at luncheon hosted by the Chamber of Commerce of Hawaii, September 10, 1999.
- <sup>34</sup> "Recruiters Rolling Up Their Sleeves." *Army Times*, November 22, 1999.
- <sup>35</sup> US Department of Labor. Report accessed from the Internet February 2000 at <http://stats.bls.gov:80/cpsatabs.htm>.
- <sup>36</sup> Statement by COL Holaday.

---

<sup>37</sup> Speech given by General Shinseki.

<sup>38</sup> Jane McHugh, "Army, Private Companies May Pair Up". *Army Times*, January 10, 2000.

<sup>39</sup> Jaffe, "The Military Wages Uphill Battle to Find the Willing Able."

<sup>40</sup> United States Army Recruiting Command, "Functional Area Assessment, (FAA) General Officer Steering Group (GOSC)." U.S. Army Recruiting Command, March 5, 1999.

<sup>41</sup> Rick Maze, "Pay Hike Won't Fix Manning, Official Says." *Army Times*, November 12, 1999.

<sup>42</sup> Jaffe, "The Military Wages Uphill Battle to Find the Willing Able."

<sup>43</sup> Jaffe, "The Military Wages Uphill Battle to Find the Willing Able."

<sup>44</sup> Sydney J. Freedberg Jr., "Beyond the GI Bill." *National Journal*, August 21, 1999.

<sup>45</sup> Jaffe, "The Military Wages Uphill Battle to Find the Willing Able."

<sup>46</sup> Jim Tice, "Recruiting Blitz Centers On Cash." *Army Times*, December 6, 1999.

<sup>47</sup> COL Rick Ballard, HQDA, "Bring the "X Factor" Into US Military Pay Equation." *Army Times*, December 20, 1999.

<sup>48</sup> Ballard, "Bring the X Factor into US Military Pay Equation."

<sup>49</sup> Sydney J. Freedberg Jr., "Beyond the GI Bill."

<sup>50</sup> Sydney J. Freedberg Jr., "Beyond the GI Bill."

<sup>51</sup> Charles H. Coates and Roland J. Pellegrin, *Military Sociology: A Study of American Military Institutions and Military Life*. University Park, MD: The Social Science Press, 1965.

<sup>52</sup> Green, "Recruiting: Past, Present and Future."

<sup>53</sup> "Low Priority for Defense Spending." *Army Times*, October 18, 1999.

<sup>54</sup> Robert Burns, "US Military Smaller After Wall Fall." Associated Press, November 7, 1999. Accessed on the Internet at <http://www.infobeat.com/stories/cgi/story.cgi?id=2561973702-943>

<sup>55</sup> Robert Burns, "US Military Smaller After Wall Fall." Associated Press, November 7, 1999.

<sup>56</sup> Jaffe, "The Military Wages Uphill Battle to Find The Willing Able."

<sup>57</sup> Burns, "US Military Smaller After Wall Fall."

<sup>58</sup> Maze, "Recruiting, Retention Will Suffer If Policies Don't Change." *Army Times*, November 22, 1999.

---

<sup>59</sup> Maze, "Recruiting, Retention Will Suffer If Policies Don't Change."

<sup>60</sup> Green, "Recruiting: Past, Present and Future."

<sup>61</sup> *Army Budget, Institute of Land Warfare*. Published by the Association of the United States Army, August 1999.

<sup>62</sup> *Army Budget, Institute of Land Warfare*.

<sup>63</sup> Speech given by General Shinseki.

<sup>64</sup> Jane McHugh, "Every Soldier's a Recruiter to Shinseki and Caldera." Army Times, December 6, 1999

<sup>65</sup> McHugh, "Every Soldier's a Recruiter to Shinseki and Caldera."

<sup>66</sup> McHugh, "Every Soldier's a Recruiter to Shinseki and Caldera."

## **APPENDIX A: Interviews**

*Please note: All Army, Army civilian, and other military persons listed below were interviewed at their bases or office locations.*

### **Senior Army Civilian**

John P. McLaurin, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army, Military Personnel Management and Equal Opportunity Policy, The Pentagon, Washington, DC, September 23, 1999.

### **Army Civilians**

Claudia Beach, Operations Research Analyst, United States Army Recruiting Command, Ft Knox, KY, October 20, 1999.

Mark Brophy, Enlisted Bonus Manager, Enlisted Personnel Directorate, United States Army Personnel Command, Alexandria VA October 7, 1999.

Ronald Canada, GM15, Chief Retention Management Division, Enlisted Personnel Management Directorate, United States Army Personnel Command, Alexandria, VA, October 8, 1999.

Betty Maxfield, Ph.D, Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, Personnel Readiness Division, Directorate of Human Resources, The Pentagon, Washington, DC, January 7, 2000.

### **Military**

Lieutenant Mark Atkins, Commander, 120<sup>th</sup> Adjutant Battalion, Ft. Jackson, SC, November 4, 1999.

Brigadier Billy R. Cooper, Deputy Commanding General East, United States Army Recruiting Command, Fort Knox, KY, October 20, 1999.

Major General (Retired) Arthur T. Dean, Chairman and CEO, Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America, Alexandria, VA, February 9, 2000.

Colonel (Promotable) Robert Decker, Director, Enlisted Personnel Directorate, U.S. Total Personnel Command, Alexandria, VA, September 8, 1999.

Lieutenant Colonel Scott Ehrmentraut, Chief, Enlisted Adjutant General's Branch, Enlisted Personnel Directorate, PERSCOM, Alexandria, VA, February 15, 2000.

Lieutenant General Larry Ellis, Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations, The Pentagon, Washington, DC, September 7, 1999.

### **Private Sector**

Beth J Asch, Ph.D, Senior Economist, RAND Corporation. Interviewed in Washington, DC, September 15, 1999.

Larry F. Candelaria, Commander, American Legion Belvoir Post #1775. Interviewed at Fort Belvoir, VA, August 18, 1999.

Edwin J. Dentz, Legislative Chairman, State American Legion, Springfield Post# 1776. Interviewed at Fort Belvoir, VA, August 18, 1999.

Bruce Orvis, Senior Analyst, RAND Corporation. Interviewed by telephone, October 14, 1999.

### **Educators**

Willie J. Harris, Retired Junior High School Principal, residing in Miami, Florida. Interviewed by telephone, December 3, 1999.

Wylene Hill, Teacher, ,residing in Miami, Florida. Interviewed by telephone, December 3, 1999.

Jean Jones, Counselor, Lake Braddock Secondary School, VA. . Interviewed by telephone, January 27, 2000

Cheryl Knutschun, Counselor, Edison High School, VA. Interviewed by telephone, January 27, 2000.

Wendy Remington, Counselor, Hayfield-Secondary School, Hayfield, VA. Interviewed by telephone, January 26, 2000.

\_\_\_\_ Sajrland, Counselor, T.C. Williams High School, Alexandria, VA. Interviewed by telephone, January 25, 2000.

Ron Tudwell, Counselor, West Springfield High School, VA. Interviewed by telephone, January 28, 2000.

## **APPENDIX B: Focus Groups, Other Face to Face Discussion Groups and Internet Discussion Groups**

### **Focus Groups (FG) - 16**

#### **Officers**

Officers processing for retirement and or separation from the Army at Ft Belvoir, VA (15 participants, at the Captain to Lieutenant Colonel level) (FG)

Officers at USAREC's Annual Training Conference, Ft Knox Kentucky (3 participants at the Lieutenant Colonel level) (FG)

Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs (2 participants, one Lieutenant Colonel and one Major) (FG)

#### **Enlisted**

Recruiting Instructors at the Recruiting and Retention School, Ft Jackson SC (3 participants at the Sergeant First Class level) (FG)

Student Recruiters at the Recruiting and Retention School, Ft Jackson SC (6 participants at the Staff Sergeant level) (FG)

Recruiters from Springfield Recruiting Station, Springfield VA (6 participants at the Staff Sergeant and Sergeant First Class level) (FG)

Soldiers retiring or separating from the Army at Ft Belvoir, VA (123 participants at the Specialist to Sergeant Major level (FG)

Applicants processing through the Military Entrance and Processing Station (MEPS), Baltimore, MD (88 participants, all civilian applicants processing into the Army) (FG)

Soldiers processing through the 369<sup>th</sup> Adjutant General Battalion (Advance Individual Training Students) Ft Jackson, SC (250 participants - new recruits at the Private level) (FG)

Soldiers processing through the 120<sup>th</sup> Adjutant General Battalion (Reception) Ft Jackson, SC (250 participants – new recruits at the Private level) (FG)

#### **Colleges**

Students from Northern Virginia Community College, Woodbridge, VA (4 participants)

Students from University of the District of Columbia, Washington, DC (4 participants)

## **High Schools**

Junior and seniors at Woodbridge Senior High School, Woodbridge, VA (27 participants - (2 FG) & 25 IDG)

Junior and seniors at Miami Killian Senior High School, Miami, Fl (5 participants) (FG)

Junior and seniors at South Ridge Senior High School, Miami, Fl (3 participants) (FG)

## **Veterans**

Veterans from Post 1975, Ft Belvoir, VA (17 participants – Veterans) (FG)

## **Other Discussion Groups (ODG) - 5**

Retirees and family members (81 participants) (FG & ODG )

Young people throughout the country reached through a variety of Internet chat discussion groups (347 individuals)

Parents throughout the country reached through a variety of Internet chat discussion groups (201 individuals) (IDG)

Teachers throughout the country reached through a variety of Internet chat discussion groups (35 individuals) (IDG)

Active duty soldier and their family members (371 participants) (FG, IDG & ODG )

## **Survey participants**

Soldiers processing through the 46<sup>th</sup> Adjutant General Battalion (Reception), Fort Knox KY (700 participants)

Soldiers processing through the 369<sup>th</sup> Adjutant General Battalion (Advance Individual Training Students) Ft Jackson, SC (250 participants - new recruits at the Private level)

Soldiers processing through the 120<sup>th</sup> Adjutant General Battalion (Reception) Ft Jackson, SC (250 participants – new recruits at the Private level)